THE EFFUSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP AND FANCY.

Vol. II.

BR. MUS.

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THE EFFUSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP AND FANCY.

In ſeveral LETTERS to and from SELECT FRIENDS.

The SECOND EDITION,
With large ADDITIONS and IMPROVEMENTS.

VOLUME II.

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BR. M.

LETTER I.

To Mrs. ——

On the Death of her Daughter.

IF I have not been ſo early as the reſt of your friends, in condoling with you upon your late affecting loſs, it was becauſe I was unwilling to interrupt you in the firſt ſtages of your grief. I had moreover ſorrows of my own to ſoothe—I had tears of my own to dry up, which, had they mingled with yours, would have increaſed our common diſtreſs. This, however, was not the principal reaſon why I have delayed to viſit you, or to write to you. I would have waited upon you while my heart and my eyes were yet full of your misfortune, had I not been ſenſible that

every argument I could have uſed on the behalf of content or comfort, would then have been ineffectual, and alſo that, by being repeated, they would have had the leſs weight now. Under the firſt attacks of extreme ſorrow nature is to be left to herſelf. At ſuch a time the conſolations of friendſhip, by their infectious tenderneſs relax the tone of the heart, and increaſe the ſenſibility of the ſufferer; yet there is a ſeaſon in affliction when the conſolations of friendſhip may be uſeful: As the ſame medicine, which, taken in the height of a fever, would infallibly increaſe it, will, if adminiſtered at a proper interval, prevent its return. It is the buſineſs of friendſhip and philoſophy rather to prevent ſorrow from growing into habit, than to defend the heart from its firſt influences. The one is a natural, the other a moral evil, and it is in the latter only that the precepts of the moraliſt can be of uſe. Thus much, Madam, to apologize

logize for my paſt conduct, and to give greater force to what I have now to ſay.

THAT you may be willing to give up the company of *Sorrow*, conſider the nature and qualities of your companion. Her conſtant buſineſs is to draw gloomy and dejecting images of life; to anticipate the hour of miſery, and to prolong it when it is arrived. Peace of mind and contentment fly from her haunts, and the amiable graces of chearfulneſs die beneath her influence. Sorrow is an enemy to virtue, while it deſtroys that chearful habit of mind that cheriſhes and ſupports it: It is an enemy to piety; for with what language ſhall we addreſs that Being, whoſe providence our complaints either accuſe or deny? It is an enemy to health, which depends greatly on the freedom and vigour of the animal ſpirits; and of happineſs it is the reverſe. Such, Madam,

is the genuine diſpoſition, and ſuch are the qualities of *Sorrow:* And will you admit ſuch an enemy to your boſom? Her ſacrifices are the aching heart and the ſleepleſs eye, the deep-ſearching groan, and the ſilent tear——Will you become a votary to ſuch a fiend? A fiend that would rob your creator of his honour, the world of your virtue, and yourſelf of your happineſs. Yet farther, it will rob your friends of your affection—here think me ſelf-intereſted if you pleaſe; but what I advance is true: Sorrow will deprive your friends of your affection. The heart that has been long a prey to miſery gradually loſes its ſenſibility—gloomy and unſocial habits ſucceed, and the love of human kind is at laſt abſorbed in the ſtagnation of melancholy. A ſad ſituation this! but too often the effect of ſorrow unſeaſonably continued and indulged.

BUT ſhall we, Madam, enquire into the cauſe of this ſorrow, which, poſſibly, you may ſay with Shakeſpear, is *too great to be patched with proverbs?* Is it on the account of her whom you lament, or on your own? "No," you anſwer; "it is on the behalf "of my dear child. Shall I not bewail the "cruelty of her deſtiny, cut off from the "faireſt hopes in the very bloom and vigour "of life? Alas! is this the end of a virtuous "and elegant education? My poor Harriot! "what does it now avail that you neglected "the trifling amuſements and vain purſuits "of your ſex, to acquire a taſte for the "finer enjoyments of the mind? Surely "long happineſs was due to you who had "taken ſuch pains to deſerve it! Dear crea-"ture! had ſhe lived to adorn the married "ſtate, her amiable ſincerity, her natural po-"liteneſs, and, above all, the virtuous ſen-"ſibility of her heart would have completed

" her own happineſs by inſuring that of her " huſband."—— All this, Madam, you might ſay, and the mother's affection exaggerate no circumſtance. But this muſt have been ſaid upon a ſuppoſition that life, while it continues, cannot but be happy; or at leaſt that virtue and excellence muſt infallibly produce happineſs. Theſe, however, are concluſions which none of the beſt obſervers of human life have admitted. Happineſs may be deſtroyed by many circumſtances which it is not in the power of virtue to prevent. It is far from being impoſſible, Madam, that the lady, whoſe death you ſo paſſionately lament, may by that death be exempted from many evils. How many has the pale tyrant unmercifully ſpared! What a laſting affliction muſt it have been to you, had the noble mind of your Harriot been doomed to ſuffer impriſonment in a feeble and unhealthy body! Had the fair roſe been early blaſted, and the root

cruelly ſuffered to live, and pine away gradually through a courſe of delightleſs years! Moreover, as beauty is no charm againſt the natural evils of life, ſo neither is virtue always a defence againſt its moral evils.—Your amiable Harriot, with all her accompliſhments, might have been unfortunately united to ſplendid inſenſibility, or wealthy avarice! Her virtues might have become the object of profligate ridicule, or miſinterpreting ill-nature; and her perſon might have adminiſtered chagrin to negligence, or fuel to jealouſy. In ſuch circumſtances I ſuppoſe the ſenſibility of her heart would have been far from defending it from miſery; and the conſciouſneſs of her own integrity would have afforded her little relief; when the only perſon whoſe eſteem it ſhould principally have procured her, looked upon her with coldneſs or averſion. You know, Madam, that theſe are no uncommon evils;

and though Harriot was every way worthy of a better fate, ſhe might nevertheleſs have had her lot among the multitudes that ſuffer and complain. Neither would the cruelty or the negligence of a huſband have been the only evils that would have endangered her peace: It would have been equally expoſed to ruin by the follies and vices of a child; or, what is the caſe of few parents, had ſhe met with no ingratitude and beheld no wretchedneſs in her offspring, her gentle heart might have been wounded, like the heart which theſe arguments are directed to ſet at eaſe, by the early death of a beloved child. Conſider, Madam, too, that by her earlier death ſhe has eſcaped thoſe ſorrows ſhe would have ſuffered for you.——You only have to mourn for the loſs of her; but ſhe might have mourned for you, for herſelf, and for her offspring.

INDEED,

INDEED, the loſs of *this intellectual Being* might be accounted a misfortune almoſt at any rate, were *this ſenſible, warm motion to become a kneaded clod* *; but we, who are taught ſuch noble conceptions of the Author of nature, can never ſuppoſe that He will ſuffer even a temporary ceſſation of conſciouſneſs.—I cannot enter into thoſe gloomy apprehenſions that when the immortal ſpirit has forſaken the body, its faculties ſhall for a time be chained down in a ſtate of unconſcious ſtupidity. Such an appointment would, in my opinion, both be inconſiſtent with the nature and properties of the ſoul, and contrary to the attributes of its benevolent Creator. To what various modes of being, inconceivable to us, may not omnipotence aſſign our departed ſpirits? What degrees of happineſs may not he have in ſtore adapted to intellectual exiſtence? Concluding then that your virtuous Harriot is now in a ſtate of ſuperior

* Shakeſpear.

bliſs,

bliſs, how ſuperfluous would it be to mourn on her account! Would you, were it in your power, recal her happy ſpirit to theſe regions of chance and vanity? Would you wiſh the liberal mind to leave its intellectual feaſt, and reanimate a clod of earth? Would you then confine its dilated powers in the priſon of a mortal body, and ſubject it to all the pains of its miſerable partner? "No; ſurely, "no." I hear you ſay, "I will mourn no "longer for my child."

YET, poſſibly, you may mourn for yourſelf; there is always ſomething ſelfiſh in thoſe ſorrows that ſeem to be the moſt ſocial. It is hard, you will ſay, that you ſhould loſe the comfort of ſuch a child in the decline of life. Her filial tenderneſs would have cheared the languor of age, and would have ſtrewed its barren way with the flowers of youth. Moreover, what joy muſt it have been to you to have

have ſeen your maternal cares ſucceſsful in her growing virtues, and thoſe virtues crowned with the happineſs they deſerved! This, Madam, you have lived to ſee. Believe it, your Harriot is now in poſſeſſion of greater happineſs than this world has to give. By her death you are no doubt deprived of many comforts, but may not theſe be more than made up to you by the pleaſure of reflecting on that ſublime felicity ſhe now enjoys. Indulge that reflection, and how poor, how contemptible will every thing elſe appear upon compariſon!

WERE not theſe arguments ſufficient to ſet your heart at eaſe, I might refer you to the univerſal law of nature, from whence there is no appeal. Have not *death* and *ruin* eſtabliſhed their empire over all her works? Is not the hiſtory of every nation replete with their triumphs? Does not every place thro' which

which you paſs preſent you with the ruins of exiſtence? Ceaſe the mother's ſighs a moment, and attend the general condition of *nature*. Caſt your eye upon yon continent—there ſhe ſits bewailing the deſtruction of her ſons;—there have periſhed, within theſe few years, more than two hundred thouſand of the human ſpecies by the devouring jaws of war. Shall we afflict ourſelves for a private loſs when the world is dying around us! Let us remember that we were born within the precincts of death, and ſacrifice to him without many tears.

I AM perſwaded, Madam, that *none of theſe things were hid from you*; but it is poſſible that in the depth of your affliction you might not attend to them. Should I add more, I might ſeem to diſtruſt your prudence; but had I ſaid leſs, I ſhould not have proportioned my arguments to the greatneſs of your grief.

Happy

Happy ſhould I be if they could have the leaſt weight with you!——If you would now convince the world that, as you are poſſeſſed of every other virtue, you are not wanting in fortitude!

LET-

LETTER II.

LET us be merciful to the opinions of others; for we know how frequently we change our own. The underſtanding is not leſs variable than the conſtitution of the body, and the intellectual are more changeable than the ſenſual faculties.

IT would be no unentertaining, perhaps no unuſeful enquiry, to examine the progreſs of our minds, and to mark by what degrees, or through what means we arrived at the different ſtages of truth or error. It would be matter of reaſonable curioſity to obſerve how the underſtanding opened, what influence the reading of men and books had upon opinion, and what power opinion had over happineſs.

I HAVE frequently been amuſed by ſuch a review of my own mind; and could obſerve that I had embraced many different principles and ſyſtems of happineſs at the different periods of the underſtanding. When, upon the firſt awaking of imagination, I met with ſome muſty volumes of romance, I thought there could be neither pleaſure nor dignity in human life, equal to thoſe of knight-errantry and the deeds of valorous chivalry, rewarded by chaſte and faithful love; nor could I believe that the world had in it any books equal, either in pleaſure or wiſdom, to the Hiſtory of the Black Prince of Bohemia, of Pariſmus and Montelion.

THESE had a ſhort reign over the imagination, and were ſucceeded in their empire by a Collection of Fairy Tales;——the conqueſt of giants and paynim knights, and all the

the enthuſiaſm of Quixotic love were put to flight by this ſmall infantry.——Then there appeared no happineſs equal to the power of gliding from ſphere to ſphere with inviſible rapidity; and I had no other ambition at the time, than to be reduced to the ſize and condition of a fairy.

THE Life and Adventures of *Robinſon Cruſo* put an end to my commerce with elves and elfins, and once more reconciled me to my own condition—but not to the ſociety of my fellow-creatures. To be caſt on a deſolate Iſland, to live by expedients, and to wander in ſolitudes, were the firſt objects of my wiſhes.

SINCE the maturity of reaſon has rendered even the remembrance of theſe things ridiculous, I have not been happier; nor dare

dare I affirm that I have been wiſer: My opinions have veered from ſyſtem to ſyſtem, and have many times, probably, reſted on ground as perfectly ideal as the regions of knight-errantry, or the iſland of *Robinſon Cruſo*.

LETTER III.

YOU are among the number of thoſe active and unwearied ſpirits, whoſe principal happineſs is borrowed from purſuit and enterpriſe.——Your pleaſure ſeems entirely to conſiſt in the chace, and the acquiſition appears to be of no other conſequence to you, than as it flatters you with the ſucceſs of your attempts.

UNDER the influence of ſuch a temper, it is no wonder if you cannot conceive any opinion in favour of the more calm and fixed enjoyments, and particularly of ſuch as require no great trouble in the acquiſition. You eſtimate your pleaſures in proportion to what they coſt, and they are only valuable

valuable in the ſame degree as they are obtained with difficulty.

I MUST acknowledge myſelf of a temper very different; (may that acknowledgment be no way inauſpicious to our friendſhip) and value my pleaſures in proportion to their cheapneſs. I will not preſume to ſay, that, therefore, I am either wiſer, or happier than you. Your love of exerciſe is gratified upon your own principles, my love of eaſe is indulged upon mine:—Your mind is kept more buſy and active in your purſuits; mine, poſſibly, is more ſerene and undiſturbed. The current of your life is more rapid, mine is more even.

I WILL not, however, allow, though you take more pains for your pleaſures, that, therefore, you enjoy more than I do. Mine by no means loſe their reliſh becauſe they

are cheaply obtained: Even that very circumſtance gives them a conſiderable merit with me. Our favourite Author ſeems to have been of the ſame opinion, for he appears to ſpeak no leſs from himſelf than from the character he draws, in the following beautiful lines:

Non è piacere al mondo
Piu ſoave di quel, che non Ti coſta
Ni Soſpiri, ni Pianti,
Ni Periglio, ni Tempo.
Un comodo Diletto!

Welcome the joys we cheaply buy!
Delights that never coſt a ſigh!
Pleaſures unpurchas'd with a tear;
Unknown to danger, and to fear!
That waſte not time in dull delay,
Nor ſteal, in proſpect, life away.
Such joys I quit, I've told you why,
And welcome thoſe we cheaply buy.

The

The circumſtance of *che non Ti coſta ni Tempo*, &c. is, indeed, a very material one. In a life ſo ſhort at the beſt, and always ſo uncertain, we have very little time to lay out in purſuits.

LETTER IV.

From * * *.

IN diſcuſſing the queſtion concerning happineſs, one of the principal points, and moſt neceſſary to be conſidered, is that of a man's native temper. To this, ſyſtem-mongers have paid little or no attention. They have viewed happineſs in the abſtract, and have wanted to find out a garment of pleaſure that would equally fit all ſhapes and ſizes. But the inclinations of men, reſulting from a different conſtitution of body and turn of mind, are as various as if they were of ſo many diſtinct ſpecies and orders of being. And in the gratifying of theſe inclinations (always ſuppoſing them innocent, or ſo corrected as to become innocent) conſiſts the happineſs of man. As our tempers, therefore,

fore, are naturally ſo different, it is no more poſſible for us to be happy in the ſame way, than it is for a poet and mathematician to ſhine in the ſame walk of ſcience.

MISTAKE me not, however, ſo far as to think that I do not know enough of what we call the enjoyments of life, to be ſenſible they are of no great value. Such is their emptineſs, that to me difficulties are neceſſary to endear them; and I find a double advantage in viewing them through the twilight of hope, both as it hides the diſagreeable part of them, and as it makes them, or at leaſt the ſhadows of them, appear bigger than they do in poſſeſſion.

NOR is the method I take, contrary to the analogy of nature. She has appointed, that there ſhall be no pleaſure without ſome previous pain. Virtue itſelf receives its chief

praiſe from the toils it contends with, and the hardſhips it paſſes through. Without theſe, that ſelf-approbation, which conſtitutes a great part of the ſatisfactions of virtue, could have no place. In all caſes, indeed, we prize things, not according to their intrinſic value, but according to the labour we beſtow upon them, or in proportion to their coſt. The purſuits of love have as much need of difficulties to give a quickneſs to their reliſh, and a keenneſs to the delight, as any thing elſe.

Our hopes, like tow'ring falcons aim
At objects in an airy height;
The little pleaſure of the game
Is from afar to view the flight.

As to the loſs of time, which you mention, it would indeed be a very material conſideration, if it were loſt to virtue; if the love of honour and juſtice did not flouriſh, or

or if our benevolence were not continually more and more extended: but when this is provided for, the loſs of it, with reſpect to what paſs for the pleaſures of life, deſerves not a thought.

Nor is there danger that the difference of our tempers ſhould be fatal to our friendſhip: For our ſentiments, in all points except the ſubject of this letter, appear to coincide, and my heart tells me that it eſteems and embraces you in its inmoſt folds.

LET-

LETTER V.

WHEN a man of diſtinguiſhed worth ſuffers unmerited calumny, it has the ſame effect as an eclipſe of the ſun, which ſerves only to make it admired the more. While it ſhines in unvaried light and ſplendor, it ſhines unnoticed; but when it is obſcured by ſome ſudden and unexpected darkneſs, it attracts our attention, and emerges with an unuſual and ſuperior eclat.

SUCH will be the only effect you will experience from thoſe unjuſt aſperſions which have been lately thrown upon you. Nothing but truth can poſſibly laſt. They will vaniſh, and leave behind them a more than uſual luſtre.

WHY

WHY then diſtreſs, or even diſturb yourſelf a moment concerning them? Too imprudently delicate! Is your peace to be broken becauſe there are fools and knaves in the world? Is it poſſible that you may ſuffer as much from the villainy of others in this reſpect, as you could do from your own demerit? Of what uſe then is virtue? Of what uſe is the conſciouſneſs of uniform integrity, if it will not produce the only end both of wiſdom and virtue, which is our own proper quiet and happineſs?

CERTAINLY, under the direction of a right philoſophy, it could not fail of producing both.——It is in vain to labour, if we refuſe to enjoy the fruits, or effects of our induſtry. Would it not be abſurd, after we had cultivated a garden, to deprive ourſelves of the enjoyment of its fruits and flowers, becauſe ſome malicious neighbour had reported

ported that it was over-run with weeds? When we beheld our walks and parterres in order, ſhould we deny ourſelves the pleaſure they might afford us on account of ſuch a report.——Impoſſible, you cry!—it would be perfectly ridiculous.

It is moſt true: and not leſs ridiculous, not leſs unreaſonable and abſurd would it be, for a virtuous man to forfeit that happineſs to which his virtue entitles him, becauſe malevolence has branded him with unjuſt accuſations.

'Till there ſhall be a poſſibility of baniſhing from human ſociety all envy, all diſhoneſty, and all ill-nature, it would be unwiſe to make ourſelves miſerable about their effects. Let thoſe effects always be confined to the objects from whence they proceed; there it is only that they ought to be, and there it

is,

is, generally, that they are productive of miſery.

EVERY good man has a right to be happy, in ſpite of the moſt villainous machinations; and if they make him otherwiſe, his philoſophy at leaſt is not equal to his virtue.

LET-

LETTER IV.

RELIGION has always ſuffered much from the folly or the treachery of her own profeſſors; but ſurely a more daring, or a more infamous ſet of wretches than at preſent appear upon her liſts, never diſgraced or diſhonoured her intereſts.——You will not require a moment to reflect that I mean thoſe venal and ſhameleſs eccleſiaſtics, who have of late, in ſuch numbers, and with ſuch uncovered countenances, proſtituted the ſacred writings, openly and avowedly retailing them for profit in periodical publications.—Avowedly, I ſay; for their advertiſements plainly prove it. One recommends his Bible for its CHEAPNESS; another for *the Elegance of the Print, the Excellence of the Engravings, or the Beauty*

Beauty of the Paper. A third ſollicits your cuſtom by a Royal, or Imperial Title, or from dedicating, by Permiſſion, to a Prince in Pettycoats. A fourth affects a diſplay of learning, and, to prove it, gives you a ſtring of Dutch and German commentators, from whoſe ingenious labours he propoſes to furniſh you with improvement and delight. A fifth, modeſtly and wiſely ſparing a diſplay of his own learning, would engage your attention by collecting the MS. ſcraps of men who had acquired conſiderable reputation in different provinces of literature, but who, like the immortal Newton, when they commenced divines, only proved that they had the weakneſs of men.——A ſixth, or poſſibly a ſixteenth, for indeed the number is not eaſy to be aſcertained, after having been palpably guilty of one pious fraud, as palpably engages in another; and having acquired ſome popularity amongſt poor fanatics, ſeeks an additional

tional contribution from them, by loading the ſacred writings with the miſinterpretations of ignorance, and the cant of enthuſiaſm.

I AM no advocate for the interpoſition of the civil power in ſuch matters, but as it has been called in to the aſſiſtance of religion, in caſes where it was much leſs liable to ſuffer, I am aſtoniſhed to ſee this proſtitution of every thing that is moſt ſacred allowed without cenſure or reſtraint.——I am aſtoniſhed even to ſee the public ſo patient under the groſs impoſitions which theſe compilers exerciſe upon them: — For their honeſty, in general, keeps pace with their abilities; and when they have drawn in the unwary to ſubſcribe to their wretched publications, by repeated aſſurances that they ſhall not exceed ſuch a number, they are determined to bring the word of God to the beſt market,

market, and ſcruple not to extend it to twice the number propoſed.

It is with the utmoſt indignation I have long beheld this ſcandalous practice, and I am convinced, that, for the honour and intereſt of religion, you will do every thing in your power to diſcountenance it.

LETTER VII.

I WOULD attempt a tranſlation for you with all my heart;—but was Horace certainly in the right through all theſe opinions? He bids us cut off the thread of extenſive hopes, and calls upon us to entertain no diſtant expectations in a life that is ſhort.—— The doctrine he infers is obvious;—to enjoy the preſent hour. But the queſtion ſtill remains, whether the preſent hour is not moſt effectually enjoyed under the influence of hope? For my own part, I am entirely of opinion that hope is one of the principal ingredients of human happineſs.

How much cheared and facilitated is our journey through life by this travelling teleſcope! Our view is not confined to the ſtages of

of a day.—If they diſpleaſe us we ſtretch forward to the next; and if the next be unfavourable, we carry our eye ſtill further, and reſt not, till, like the dove that was ſent forth in the deluge, we at laſt find out the branch of olive.

Those who ſeek their happineſs in theſe viſionary purſuits, have at leaſt this advantage, that they feel no diſtreſs from thoſe interfering evils that always mix with preſent, and what are called real enjoyments.

How happy is that ſpirit which owes its pleaſures to future proſpects! In a life like this, where no preſent object is to be enjoyed without ſomething to be ſuffered, how much to be envied are the children of Hope!—— Is their lot deception? Give it what name you pleaſe,—the term will not change its condition.——But once more, once more,

after a thouſand repetitions, may I be allowed to ſay, that, to be agreeably deceived, is to enjoy the greateſt happineſs *this* world has to give.—You ſee I lay an emphaſis on *this*.

Preſque toutes les plaiſirs des hommes,
Ne ſont qui de douces erreurs.

And the ſweeteſt of all errours, if it ſhould prove an errour, is hope.

BELIEVE me, your Epicurean friend, whatever pleaſures he might receive from the circulation of the glaſs, knew but little of that ſoothing and enthuſiaſtic adulation which the mind lays up for itſelf in attending to ſcenes of diſtant happineſs.—His cotemporary and acquaintance, one can ſcarcely call him his friend, VIRGIL, ſeems to have been of a temper much more turned to the refined and abſtracted pleaſures, and conſequently

quently to thoſe of hope among the reſt, of which he ſeldom makes mention but with praiſe.——Horace had his enjoyments, but they were productive of pain.—The enjoyments of Virgil, though greater and more elegant, were attended with no diſtreſs.

LETTER VIII.

IT is very fortunate when a man places his happineſs in thoſe objects that are incapable of giving him pain. You who are bleſt with ſuch ſocial and domeſtic connections as are hardly ever imbittered even by human frailty, may, poſſibly, ſmile at the inferences I would draw from this obſervation. But alas! my friend, yours is an uncommon lot: Moſt of thoſe objects from which we generally ſeek for pleaſure are the moſt cruel uſurers, and make us pay intereſt upon intereſt for what they advance us. Even the blameleſs enjoyments of friendſhip and married love have many painful ingredients, many diſquietudes that are the conſequence of thoſe very principles that conſti-

tute

tute their happineſs. To ſpeak of love in particular,—of what doubts, what ſuſpicions, what heart-burnings and anxieties, is not that paſſion, even when moſt exalted, occaſionally productive? The cares of two creatures liable to error and frailty throw their weight upon one, and all the evils to which they are mutually expoſed, they mutually feel. There are many other general objects of happineſs which will bear the compariſon to a ſtill greater diſadvantage, and will in effect be found to produce infinitely more pain than pleaſure. Why then ſhould we ſmile at the purſuits of the harmleſs virtuoſo? Why ſhould we look with comtemptuous ſuperiority upon him, while he is employed in collecting ſhells, or foſſils, or butterflies?—Happy man! let us rather ſay, and as wiſe as happy! who has confined his expectations of pleaſure to ſuch circumſtances as cannot poſſibly give him pain:—The ſhell

and the foſſil will preſerve their form, and the butterfly will retain the beauty of its colours. If he is delighted with looking upon theſe, his pleaſure is, certainly, not leſs ſincere, not leſs important to himſelf, than if it were derived from ſome ſocial or domeſtic connection.——But is it even leſs rational? We can hardly call it unnatural, while it pays ſuch homage to nature, ſuch extraordinary attention, as to trace her through all the beautiful minuteneſs of her operations.

MAY we not obſerve upon this occaſion that nature ſeems to have been jealous of the worſhip due to her, and that, while her charms might have been altogether neglected in the buſy and ſocial purſuits of men, ſhe appears to have obviated the conſequences of that inattention, by reſerving to herſelf *a number of the elect*;—of thoſe who, carried away by her pure ſimplicity and enthuſiaſm, have

have not *bowed the knee to Baal?* A Boyle, a Sloan, and a Woodward, were the prieſts of Nature; and their office deſerves rather reſpect than ridicule.—Reflect on theſe things, and think with ſome veneration of our honeſt and inoffenſive friend.

LET-

LETTER IX.

THE almoſt invariable vivacity of Mrs. *** has procured her the character of the beſt-natured woman in the world. There is ſomething engaging in her manner, and her enlivening ſpirit has an irreſiſtible charm. We are always pleaſed with her, and, therefore, we call her good-natured.

BUT in this character, as well as in many others, we entirely miſtake good humour for good nature. Theſe are very different qualities. And thoſe who are poſſeſſed of the one, may be abſolutely deſtitute of the other.

THERE is frequently a degree of vanity and ſelf-complacency in good humour, which in the compoſition of good nature have no part

part. A good-humoured man, while he makes his friend happy with his chearful and lively freedom of temper, has at the ſame time his own happineſs no leſs in view, and his friend owes more than half the pleaſure he receives from him to the motive of pleaſing himſelf.

I DO not ſay that ſuch a motive merits no praiſe.—I am ſenſible of the eternal connection between the ſelfiſh and the ſocial duties. —All I contend for is the diſtinction between good nature and good humour.

GOOD nature, then, differs eſſentially from good humour in the laſt-mentioned circumſtance; for nothing ſelfiſh enters into its principles. The pleaſure and happineſs of others are its only objects, and all that it does, or ſuffers, proceeds from motives of the ſame kind.

If you can make it appear that Mrs. *** is actuated by no other principle in her whole ſocial conduct, we will readily allow her the character ſhe has acquired, and call her one of the beſt-natured women in the world.

But I, who have had many opportunities of obſerving her in private, know that ſhe is far from deſerving this encomium; and from her example I am convinced, that a well-humoured, ill-natured perſon is no inconſiſtent character.

I have ſeen her petulant and envious on the moſt trifling occaſions;—I have ſeen her inſenſible to the ſevereſt diſtreſs of a fellow-creature;—I have known her untender to thoſe who had a natural right to her kindneſs;—I have known her ſacrifice to her vanity the peace both of thoſe who were, and of thoſe who were not, dependent on her;—

I have

I have obſerved her grieve for the diſtreſſes of her friends, not becauſe they were in diſtreſs, but becauſe, to ſave appearances, ſhe ſhould be obliged to aſſiſt them.

YET, notwithſtanding all this, Mrs. *** is one of the beſt-humoured women in the world.

LET-

LETTER X.

From Mr. ******.

IN a world ſo entirely given up to diſſipation of every kind, where amuſement ſeems to be the principal buſineſs of life, and buſineſs itſelf to be purſued only as ſubſervient to amuſement——at a time when the labours of ingenuity ſeem to have exhauſted the ſtores of imagination, and to have left nothing new under the ſun, is it not ſtrange that after having lived years in this maze of jocundity, poſſeſſed of health, ſpirits, and fortune, a man may nevertheleſs be compelled to ſay, *I have rarely known pleaſure?*

IT may at firſt ſight ſeem ſtrange that I ſhould be led into this train of thought by the

the happineſs I lately enjoyed at D———. It is certain, however, that theſe reflections, and I cannot but think they are founded on truth and nature, were firſt ſuggeſted to me by that pleaſing incident.

THE amuſements of life are numerous as the vices of the age, the pleaſures few as the virtues. The reaſon is, the mind of man has ſomething of Divinity in its nature. It fixes its eye at once upon the paſt, the preſent, and the future: It is ever comparing ideas: The object capable of giving it pleaſure muſt be delightful, as any thing experience has yet taſted, equal to our previous expectations, and apparently productive of no evil conſequence. Can any of the faſhionable, and ſo much ſought after amuſements anſwer to this character? Wit and humour, wine and muſic, and all the apparatus of ſplendor and luxury will not, I fear,

after

after an impartial examination, be found equal to any one part of it. Theſe may contribute to delight, but they are not alone capable of giving it.

The Platonic wiſe man, greatly deſpiſing theſe, ſeeks for pleaſure in the ſchools of antiquity. He follows her through the fairy ſcenes of ancient poeſy, enquires of the ſages of old, ſits down with Plato beneath his ſhade, and wanders up and down the porticos of Athens. At length, when he has wearied himſelf with laborious reſearches, he finds he expected more from ſcience than it had to give, and that happineſs is no more to be found in abundance of knowledge than wiſdom in a multitude of words. After having ſpent the greateſt part of life in the ſevere aſſiduities of ſtudy, he has the mortification to find that he is but a novice in ſcience, that boundleſs fields of learning yet

remain unexplored, and that he muſt at length quit the proſpect, or periſh in the ſearch.

VARIOUS as the minds of men are, I am much miſtaken if they are not all to be made happy the ſame way; otherwiſe I think they are not capable of happineſs here at all. The variety of their inclinations reaches no farther than to diſpoſe them to be variouſly amuſed.

THE man whoſe heart is replete with pure and unaffected piety, who looks upon the Father of nature in that juſt and amiable light which all his works reflect upon him, cannot fail of taſting the ſublimeſt pleaſure, in contemplating the ſtupendous and innumerable effects of infinite goodneſs. Whether he looks abroad on the natural or the moral world, his reflections muſt ſtill be at-

tended with delight; and the ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, ſo far from leſſening, will increaſe his pleaſure, while it places the forbearing kindneſs and indulgence of his Creator in a ſtill more intereſting point of view. Here his mind may dwell upon the preſent, look back to the paſt, or ſtretch forward into futurity with equal ſatisfaction; and, the more he indulges contemplation, the higher will his delight ariſe. Such a diſpoſition as this ſeems to be the moſt ſecure foundation on which the fabrick of pleaſure can be built.

NEXT to the veneration of the ſupreme Being, the love of human kind ſeems to be the moſt promiſing ſource of happineſs. And it is a never-failing one to him who, poſſeſt of this principle, enjoys alſo the power of indulging his benevolence; who makes the ſuperiority of his fortune, his knowledge, or his

his power, ſubſervient to the wants of his fellow creatures. It is true there are few whoſe power or fortune are ſo adequate to the wants of mankind, as to render them capable of performing acts of univerſal beneficence; but a ſpirit of univerſal benevolence may be poſſeſſed by all; and the bounteous Father of nature has not proportioned the pleaſure to the greatneſs of the effect, but to the greatneſs of the cauſe.

THE contemplation of the beauties of the univerſe, the cordial enjoyments of friendſhip, the tender delights of love, and the rational pleaſures of religion are open to all; and they are, all of them, in my opinion, capable of giving that real happineſs I would contend for. Theſe being the only fountains that I know of, from which true pleaſure ſprings, it is no wonder that many ſhould be compelled to ſay they have not yet found it,

and ſhould ſtill cry out, " Who will ſhew us " any good?" They ſeek it in every way, but the true way. They want a heart for devotion, humanity, friendſhip and love, and a taſte for what is truly beautiful and admirable.

LET-

LETTER XI.

From the ſame.

I PRETEND not to the cure of indolence; it is an incorrigible diſorder.—But if you will not act, I would at leaſt have you think, and ſhall therefore torment you with the following allegory:

As INDUSTRY was going abroad early to his labour, and climbing, without impatience, a lofty mountain over which he was obliged to paſs, he eſpied upon the ſummit a beautiful nymph employed in ſearching for uncommon flowers, and often viewing with great attention the wide extended ſcenes that were ſtretched around her. Her eyes were piercing as the beams of the evening ſtar, with a cer-

tain twinkling wantonneſs in them that heightened the reſemblance. Her features were irregular, yet not leſs pleaſing than thoſe of a more perfect beauty. She had a certain agreeable wildneſs in her air, dreſs, and countenance, and ſomething ſo ſpeakingly inquiſitive in the latter, that almoſt every feature ſeemed to aſk a queſtion. Upon the approach of INDUSTRY ſhe fell into immediate diſcourſe with him, and aſked him, almoſt in the ſame breath, who he was, where he lived, whither he was going, and what there was in the neighbourhood worth ſeeing. INDUSTRY, ever accuſtomed to make the beſt of his time, anſwered the laſt queſtion firſt. He told her that there was nothing ſo well worth ſeeing as a beautiful pleaſure-houſe in the adjacent wood, and offered to conduct her to it. The Nymph, whoſe name was CURIOSITY, eagerly followed him, and by the numberleſs queſtions ſhe put to him as they paſſed, diſcovered

vered an inſatiable thirſt of knowledge. INDUSTRY, who liked the humour of the Nymph, failed not to make every poſſible advantage of this, and though ſhe found herſelf deceived in ſome points, when ſhe arrived at the wood, yet ſhe was gratified in ſo many others that ſhe could not help loving her deceiver, and yielding to every propoſal of his that might tend to her information. In conſequence of this converſation CURIOSITY in due time brought forth a ſon, who, by order of the Sylvan deities, was named TRAVEL. He was favoured by all the gods, and in his youth was frequently inſtructed by them in viſions. When he grew up he diſcovered in his temper his mother's thirſt of knowledge, and his father's activity. He never ſtaid longer in any place, than, Bee-like, to collect the ſweets that he found there. PLEASURE and WISDOM were his companions, and his attendants were PLENTY and VARIETY. By

obſerving the manners and cuſtoms of various nations, he became polite and unprejudiced; and by comparing their laws, and the various modes of worſhip and government, he learned to be juſt, politick, and to ſerve the gods acceptably. In a large city, where much was to be ſeen, he had recourſe for accommodations to the houſe of a gentleman who was known to take a pleaſure in entertaining travellers. The name of this perſon was IDLENESS. He was a corpulent good-natured man. If he had but proviſion for the day, and a companion to laugh away the hours, which were otherwiſe tedious to him, he was contented. He never interfered in the intereſt of others, nor felt the emotions either of friendſhip or enmity. He would not, on any account, go two furlongs from his own door, but uſed to ſay, Pleaſure and Trouble were ſuch inveterate enemies, that they could not poſſibly meet upon the ſame occaſion. He

was

was much entertained with the converſation of TRAVEL, and conceived a deſign to diſſuade him from rambling any more, that he might keep him with him. "My friend," ſaid IDLENESS, "I am amazed at your "ſtrange diſpoſition. Who, like you, would "for ever wander about, in ſearch of plea-"ſure, and not ſtand ſtill a moment to enjoy "it? Why will you expoſe yourſelf to per-"petual dangers, and needleſs difficulties, "and undergo abroad a thouſand inconve-"niences which you would never meet with "at home? Why ſhould you, who are a free "man, ſubmit to the arbitrary government "of a ſea-captain, more boiſterous than the "element on which he commands, or to the "no leſs abſolute ſway of an itinerant coach-"man?" "Truce with your queries," ſaid Travel, "till I have propoſed an equal num-"ber, and then, if you pleaſe, we will ba-"lance the account. How can you waſte

"your

" your time, and impair your health by re-
" fuſing to give your body and mind that
" due exerciſe nature ſo loudly calls for?
" How can you confine that arduous curio-
" ſity, implanted in the ſoul to urge you on
" to unbounded knowledge, within the nar-
" row limits of one city or province? Are you
" really ſo deſtitute of courage as to be over-
" awed by viſionary dangers, and trivial in-
" conveniences?" Here ended the diſpute; IDLENESS would not be at the pains to ſeek further arguments, nor, if he had, would TRAVEL have ſtaid to hear them.

LET-

LETTER XII.

To Mr. ********.

On the Study of Poetry.

THERE are not many modern productions that I read a ſecond time, therefore you may take it as a compliment, that I have lately re-peruſed your Elegy. However, without a compliment, I aſſure you that I read it again with repeated pleaſure. What my ingenious friend and countryman, Dr. Burn, once ſaid of ſome juvenile pieces of a friend of yours, I may apply with greater propriety to your verſes, viz. that *they diſplay a very rich vein of poetry which Time will ripen and bring to perfection.* The art of poetry is, like every other art, progreſſive;

greſſive; and excellence muſt always be the effect of time. Mr. Pope ſays, that a man muſt be born to judge as well as to write; but it is certain that no man is born with perfect principles of judgment, for theſe can only be collected from comparative obſervation, and comparative obſervation muſt be a work of time. In like manner, the faculty of imagination, or what we call genius, is gradually ripened and matured. The mind collects its treaſures progreſſively, and borrows its ideas of harmony, beauty and ſublimity, from an acquaintance with the works of nature. Poſſibly the judgment may continue to be improved through the whole progreſs of life, becauſe the power of comparative obſervation will always remain perfect, but I believe there is a period beyond which genius rather decays than improves; and it is then probably at the beſt when the mind has been enriched by long obſervation, and

the faculties of the body have felt no ſenſible decay.

I KNOW you have acquired a juſtneſs of taſte very uncommon at your early time of life; and when I have obſerved you write a ſtanza, and reject it repeatedly, I have told you that your judgment was too ripe for your imagination. This I ſuggeſted to you, that you might not be diſcouraged by the ſeeming labour or penury of thought; and I have now put you in mind that the faculty of imagination is progreſſive, leſt, when your ſevere judgment compares your own performances with the productions of mature genius, you ſhould ſit down in deſpair.

THERE is an inſtance within your own knowlege, of a gentleman who has acquired a conſiderable reputation in the poetical world, but

but who, nevertheleſs, when he was young, and reſident at your univerſity, publiſhed a volume of poems in which there are very few things tolerable.

NEED I tell you for your encouragement, that you are of a poetical family? A gentleman of your name, an Oxford man too, who was contemporary with Andrew Marvel, and not unlike him in the ſpirit of his writings, publiſhed ſeveral dramatic pieces and other poems, ſome of which (particularly the Complaint of the Deſerted Ariadne) are very pretty. His book, I remember, is preceded by almoſt an hundred recommendatory poems, according to the cuſtom of thoſe times—many of which were written by heads of houſes and ſenior fellows.—What do you think of that, Sir? But the beſt of thoſe prefatory poems is the laſt, written by the bookſeller, which ends thus:

Six

Six hundred pages of good wit; read, try it.
Would all that cannot mend this book may
buy it.

If this ſcrawl prevails upon you to invoke the Muſe, *you ſhall hear further from me on the ſtudy of poetry.*

LET-

LETTER XIII.

To the ſame.

The Subject continued.

TO tell you, as I did in my laſt, that the imagination as well as the judgment is progreſſive, might be an antidote againſt poetical deſpair; but I ſuppoſe you will not think yourſelf much obliged to me, unleſs I inform you how the progreſs of both may be aſſiſted.

POETICAL imagination muſt be improved by the acquiſition of poetical ideas, and theſe ideas muſt be borrowed from all the viſible works of nature. A poet ſhould not ſit down ſatisfied with ſuperficial knowledge or curſory obſervation; he muſt enquire into the minute dependencies and the fine combinations of

the univerſal ſyſtem. By tracing the ſublime and harmonious operations of nature, he will unavoidably collect ideas of ſublimity and harmony, and by beholding the elegant ſimplicity of her works, he will learn to tranſcribe it in his own.

But a knowledge of the external works of nature, is not enough for a poet: He muſt be well verſed in that kind of learning which is ſcholaſtically denominated metaphyſics. If he were not acquainted with the intellectual powers; if he underſtood nothing of the various modes of ideal perception; were he a ſtranger to the different movements of the heart, the cauſes, the progreſs and effects of ſimple and complicated paſſions, his poetical powers would be confined within the narrow province of external deſcription; and he would never attain the nobleſt end of poetry, the power of addreſſing himſelf to the heart.

This moral knowledge is to be acquired only by an attentive obſervation of the human mind, and a comparative view of the diverſity of characters.

It is by no means ſufficient to obtain the elements alone either of moral or natural knowlege. A poet ſhould examine diſtinctly the minuteſt relations and reſemblances of the rational, the animal, the vegetable and inanimate creation; for hence ariſe all the beauties of comparative imagery. Had Shakeſpear been unacquainted with the quickneſs of animal ſenſation in the minuteſt creatures, how could it have entered into his imagination to ſay ſo beautifully and pathetically,

—— The poor beetle that we tread upon,
In corporal ſufferance feels a pang as great
As when a giant dies.

Had

Had he been deficient in the *minutiæ* of phyſical knowledge, could he have thought of the following ſtriking argument againſt ſelf-love?

——— Thou'rt not thy ſelf,
For thou exiſt'ſt on many a thouſand grains
That iſſue out of duſt ———.

Had he been a ſuperficial obſerver of human nature, could he have added to the above argument this juſt reflection on the miſery of life?

——— Happy thou art not,
For what thou haſt not, ſtill thou ſtriv'ſt to get,
And what thou haſt forget'ſt. ———

When a competent ſtock of moral and natural knowledge is acquired, and the mind is ſo well furniſhed with ideas, that the imagination rather ſeems to riot than to languiſh over her intellectual feaſt, may we not then

catch the reed and call the muſe? No: ſomething more may yet be wanting, and that ſomething I can find no better name for than *Enthuſiaſm.* Yes, Sir, you muſt be an enthuſiaſt before you can be a poet. But then, how is this to be obtained? That we muſt make our queſtion. There is ſuch a thing as acquiring a religious Enthuſiaſm; and, if ſo, why may not a poetical *Furor* alſo be acquired? Provided the principles thereof are connate with the mind, there are means, I believe, of actuating and awakening them. But let no bold man ſuppoſe that this divine *Afflatus* can be procured by artificial means alone; it is only when the ſeeds of it are inherent in nature that thoſe means can be of any uſe. Suppoſing then, my friend, for I cannot doubt it, that Melpomene ſmiled upon your birth; or in other words, ſuppoſing that nature formed your mind to be ſmitten with the love of herſelf, you are then poſſeſſed of

thoſe

thoſe original principles which art may call forth, and awaken into action.

One method of kindling poetical as well as religious enthuſiaſm, is to read thoſe writings that are moſt impregnated with it: ſuch, in the Greek, are the works of Moſchus, Tyrtæus, Æſchylus, Pindar, and ſome paſtoral pieces of Theocritus: To theſe may be added all the writings of Plato. In the Latin, I would recommend Virgil, Tibullus, Lucan, ſeveral of the odes of Horace, and ſome of the metamorphoſes of Ovid. The warmeſt of the Italian writers are Petrarch, Taſſo, and Arioſto. Almoſt all the enthuſiaſm of France has been laviſhed on Greſſet. Germany has of late aſtoniſhed the world with a true-born bard in Geſſner, and you may catch ſome enthuſiaſm from his writings, even from our tranſlations. The poets of our own country that were nurſt in the lap of nature, and

caught the true inſpiring breath, were Spencer, Shakeſpear, Milton and Thomſon. We have had ſeveral admired poets beſide theſe, but not of the claſs I am ſpeaking of. In this claſs, however, I could rank ſome living names; but as you know my favourite authors, I have no occaſion to mention them here.

A READER, poſſeſſed of the genuine principles of poetry, cannot fail of catching from theſe authors that inſpiration with which they wrote. More particularly in their deſcriptions of nature, rural imagery, pictures of private virtue and paſtoral innocence, there is an inchantment irreſiſtible. What poet can read the following paſſages in Virgil's Georgicks, and Thomſon's Seaſons, without being tranſported to the very places they deſcribe, and feeling the enthuſiaſm from which they flowed!

Flumina amem ſylvaſque inglorius! O ubi campi
Sperchiuſque, et virginibus bacchata lacænis
Taygeta! O qui me gelidis in montibus Hæmi
Siſtat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra?
G. II. v. 486.

Sed me Parnaſſi deſerta per ardua dulcis
Raptat amor: juvat ire jugis, qua nulla priorum
Caſtaliam molli divertitur orbita clivo.
G. III. v. 291.

Et juvat undantem buxo ſpectare cytorum,
Naryciæque picis lucos: juvat arva videre,
Non raſtris hominum, NON ULLI OBNOXIA CURÆ.
G. II. v. 437.

Thrice happy he! who, on the ſunleſs ſide
Of a romantic mountain, foreſt-crown'd,
Beneath the whole collected ſhade reclines,
Or in the gelid caverns, woodbine-wrought,
And freſh-bedew'd with ever ſpouting ſtreams,
Sits coolly calm! *Summer.*

Welcome, ye ſhades! ye bowery thickets, hail!
Ye lofty pines! ye venerable oaks!
Ye aſhes wild reſounding o'er the ſteep!
Delicious is your ſhelter to the ſoul. *Summer.*

—Seek the bank where flowering elders crowd,
Where ſcatter'd wild the lily of the vale
Its balmy eſſence breathes, where cowſlips hang
The dewy head, where purple violets lurk,
With all the lowly children of the ſhade:
Or lie reclin'd beneath yon ſpreading aſh,
Hung o'er the ſteep; ———
There let the claſſic page thy fancy lead
Thro' rural ſcenes, ſuch as the *Mantuan* ſwain
Paints in the matchleſs harmony of ſong.
Or catch thyſelf the landſkip gliding ſwift
Athwart Imagination's vivid eye. *Spring.*

The ſame poetical infection may be caught from the Lyric muſe, when, with all her native wildneſs and freedom, ſhe thus ſweetly warbles:

Once when by Trent's pellucid ſtreams,
In days of prattling infancy,
Led by young wondering extaſy,
To view the ſun's refulgent beams,
As on the ſportive waves they play'd,
Too far I negligently ſtray'd,
The God of day his lamp withdrew,
Evening her duſky mantle ſpread,
And from her moiſten'd treſſes ſhed
Refreſhing drops of pearly dew.

Cloſe

Cloſe by the borders of a wood,
Where an old ruin'd abbey ſtood,
Far from a fondling mother's ſight,
With toil of childiſh ſport oppreſs'd
My tender limbs ſunk down to reſt,
'Midſt the dark horrors of the night.
As Horace erſt by fabled doves
With Spring's firſt leaves was mantled o'er,
A like regard the Britiſh loves
To me their future poet bore;
Nor left me guardianleſs alone,
For tho' no Nymph nor Faun appear'd,
Nor piping Satyr was there heard,
And here the Dryads are unknown,
Yet natives true of Engliſh ground,
Sweet elves and fays in mantles green,
By Shepherds oft in moonlight ſeen
And dapper Fairies danc'd around.
The nightingale her love-lorn lay
Neglecting on the neighbouring ſpray,
Strew'd with freſh flowers my turfy bed;
And, at the firſt approach of morn,
The redbreaſt ſtript the fragrant thorn,
On roſes wild to lay my head.
Thus, as the wondering ruſtics ſay,
In ſmiling ſleep they found me laid
Beneath a bloſſom'd hawthorn's ſhade;

While

While ſportive bees in myſtic play,
With honey fill'd my little lips
Blent with each ſweet that *Zephyr* ſips
From flowery cups in balmy May.

Epiſtles of Ariſtippus.

Sortez du ſein des violettes,
Croiſſez feuillagés fortunés,
Couronnez ces belles retraites,
Ces detours, ces routes ſecrettes
Aux plus doux accords deſtinés!
Ma muſe pour vous attendrie
D'une charmante rêverie
Subit deja l'aimable loi;
Les bois, les valons, les montagnes,
Toute la ſcène de campagnes
Prend une ame & s'orne pour moi.
Aux yeux de l'ignaire vulgaire,
Tout eſt mort, tout eſt ſolitaire;
Un bois n'eſt q'un ſombre réduit,
Un ruiſſeau n'eſt q'une onde claire,
Les Zephirs ne ſont que du bruit:
Aux yeux que Calliope éclaire,
Tout brille, tout penſe, tout vit.

Greſſet.

From

FROM the laſt quoted author I might draw many other beautiful paſſages, pregnant with the ſame genuine ſpirit of enthuſiaſm, were not theſe ſufficient to inform you what kind of poetry it is from which you are moſt likely to catch the *inſpiring breath*.

BUT the reading of poetry is not the only means by which poetical imagination may be aſſiſted and poetical enthuſiaſm awakened; for as the former muſt be enriched with the knowledge of nature, ſo the latter muſt be inflamed by her love. From this paſſion the true poet derives thoſe ineffable ſenſations that inſpirit all his works, and place them ſo far above the ſtrain of vulgar compoſitions. With the inquiſitive eye of love he ſearches out all her beauties, and expatiates on them with the raptures which that paſſion inſpires. The queſtion then is, by what means may this love of nature moſt effectually be excited?

And,

And, I anſwer, by frequent converſation with her; or, in ſacred words, *by beholding her fair beauty, and viſiting her temple.* That admirable wiſdom which is viſible in all her operations, the exquiſite ſymmetry and proportion of her living works, and the ſimple beauty wherewith ſhe has adorned the inanimate creation, inſpire the contemplative mind with a kind of religious veneration, and refined affection. Happy enthuſiaſm! innocent idolatry! This love of nature, my friend, was that *Egeria* whom the Roman Lawgiver met in the grove, and is that truly inſpiring muſe, without whoſe favour no poet can live. It is this that makes the true poet ſo fond of retirement. He wants to be alone with his miſtreſs, and to enjoy her charms in the quiet of rural ſolitude. *O Rus quando Te aſpiciam?* is the language of every genuine ſon of Phœbus, whoſe natural ſentiments have not been extinguiſhed in the purſuit of popular glory. That philoſophical

ſtudy

ſtudy of nature, which I before recommended as neceſſary for the information of the mind, may be of great uſe alſo to make the poet enamoured of thoſe beauties he explores. Who is more likely to become the lover of nature than the philoſopher who employs himſelf in the contemplation of her works? Hence, though poetry is not always the concomitant of philoſophy, there having been good philoſophers who were not poets, ſhe can by no means diſpenſe with the aſſiſtance of her ſiſter ſcience. Philoſophy muſt be her inſtructreſs.

> Tutor'd by *her*, hence Poetry exalts
> Her voice to ages, and informs the page
> With muſic, image, ſentiment and thought
> Never to die. ——— *Summer.*

THERE is one means of kindling the flame of poetical enthuſiaſm beſide thoſe I have mentioned, but it is a dangerous means, and I would not haſtily recommend it to you; parti-

particularly when I recollect what one of your own prophets has ſpoken,

> And let th' aſpiring youth beware of love,
> Of the ſmooth glance beware, the kindling grace,
> Th' inticing ſmile, the modeſt-ſeeming eye.
> *Spring.*

But if you ſhould be hardy enough to riſque theſe dangers, I will venture to aſſure you, that by means of this paſſion you will find your poetical enthuſiaſm greatly heightened. Could you reverſe the method of religious enthuſiaſts, who ſometimes make a quick tranſition from the love of God to the love of the creature, and remove your paſſion from a mortal miſtreſs to an immortal muſe, it would be better ſtill. However I will not aſſert that this is practicable.

AFTER all this has been advanced with reſpect to the aſſiſtance of poetic imagination

and enthuſiaſm, one thing muſt be repeated, that, where nature has not tuned the ear to harmony, and ſown the ſeeds of that enthuſiaſm in the mind, every means will be vain.

I HAVE promiſed you ſome hints for improving your judgment in poetry, but you ſee here is no room for them.

LET-

LETTER XIV.

To the ſame.

The Subject continued.

I HAVE before had occaſion to take notice that judgment in poetry is improved by comparative obſervation. The mind borrows its idea of mechanic excellence from beholding different objects, and comparing them with each other. It is by this compariſon that all defects are found, for had there been no different modes of beauty, there would have been no ſuch thing as deformity. I will not aſſert that there are no innate ideas of excellence; but if there be ſuch ideas, they are of little uſe, for we find that every art and ſcience is extremely ſlow in its progreſs to perfection; the fine arts more particularly.

Every

Every ſucceeding artiſt, if not altogether deſtitute of genius, adds ſomething to the model upon which he forms himſelf; thus perfection is attained by gradual improvement. Whether our poetry has not for ſome time been at its higheſt perfection, I ſhall not take upon me to determine, but I will venture to ſay, that, for a century paſt, it has received no improvement; for Milton's Comus is, beyond all compariſon, the fineſt poem in the Engliſh language. That different kinds of rhyming verſification have been improved, I will allow; but thoſe, ſimply conſidered, do not come under the denomination of poetry; a witty and harmonious combination of words alone, can no more make a fine poem, than a judicious mixture of colours can be termed an elegant painting. Yet, therefore, I maintain that Comus is the beſt poem in our language, and ſtill ſhall continue ſo to do, till I find one ſuperior to it in thoſe great

eſſentials of poetry, imagery and enthuſiaſm. This then, my friend, I would recommend to you as the model by which you ſhould form your judgment———

——Be this your ſtudy and delight,
Read it by day, and meditate by night.

In ſhort, never leave it till you have imbibed the very ſpirit and ſoul of it. By making this piece familiar to you, your judgment in that ſpecies of poetry will receive all the information that is requiſite.

THE province of poetic judgment is two-fold, verbal and ſentimental.

IN the verbal province is included whatever relates to the management of words, their arrangement and combination, their propriety or impropriety, the harmony or diſſonance, the force or weakneſs, the melody or aſperity of verſification.

WITH

WITH reſpect to the arrangement of words, that is undoubtedly the beſt which is the moſt eaſy and obvious. Though poetry will admit of more tranſpoſitions, and will bear them better than proſe, yet they ought rarely to be admitted: particularly in deſcriptive and didactic poetry, and thoſe other ſpecies that are characterized by eaſe, they ſhould be very ſparingly uſed. Notwithſtanding they may ſometimes be allowed for the greater energy of expreſſion.

" Follows the looſen'd, aggravated roar,"

" Inſequitur clamorque virum, ſtridorque rudentum."

But where this diſpoſition of words is not neceſſary to give greater force or weight to the line, it becomes ſtiff and awkward, as in the following inſtance:

Here paſtures, rocks, wild waſtes and wandering rills,
There ſpiry foreſts, groves, and ſun-climb'd hills,

Alternate *gives the varied proſpect* round.

Parentheſes too long, or too frequently admitted, always deſtroy the eaſe and beauty of order in poetry, whatever they may do in proſe; and they are utterly inſufferable when they are introduced only as a comment on the text. Obſerve this effect in the following paſſage:

> And toil we ſtill for ſublunary pay?
> Deſy the dangers of the field, and flood,
> Or, ſpider like, ſpin out our precious all,
> Our more than vitals ſpin (if no regard
> To great futurity) in curious webs
> Of ſubtile thought, and exquiſite deſign;
> (Fine net-work of the brain!) to catch a fly?
> The momentary buz of vain renown!

The above quotation puts me in mind of another fault not uncommon with many poets, but moſt egregious in the author of the Night-Thoughts; and that I can find no better

better name for than word-chacing. Sometimes a word is purſued through the whole chain of its relations and connections, and as every different link has a chain depending from it, ſo each is traced down to its extremity, till the ſimple original idea fares like a grain of muſtard-ſeed, that ſhoots up and branches into an enormous tree. But it is the fate of the ideal tree to bear a load of uſeleſs boughs, that like ſo many idle ſuckers dry up the vital pith of ſenſe.

It is worth while to obſerve this method of word-chacing or word-ſpinning in the paſſage above quoted. The word *toil* in the firſt line, would certainly have been followed by *ſpin* in the next, had not the word *pay*, at the end of the line, introduced a military idea, and ſuggeſted *the dangers of the field and flood*. In the next line, however, the ſpinning begins.

Or, ſpider-like, ſpin out our precious all.

It was impoſſible to mention the words *ſpin out*, without thinking of vitals—ſo it proceeds,

Our more than vitals ſpin.———

Then comes the explanatory *Parentheſis*, after which the ſpinning goes on,

——— in curious webs
Of ſubtile thought, and exquiſite deſign;
(Fine net-work of the brain!)

The word *curious* was naturally followed by *ſubtile* and *exquiſite*. *Webs* put the author in mind of *net-work*, and *net-work* was unalienable from the *brain*. But then what follows?

——— To catch a *fly?*
The momentary *buz* of vain renown!

It was the proper buſineſs of the web and the net-work to catch the fly—but here, unfortunately, the fly put the poet in mind of buzzing,

buzzing, and what was a *Fly* in one line, becomes a *Buz* in the next. This might, however, be an involuntary fault. The author had ſpun his metaphor ſo far that he knew not any other way to draw, in the concluſion, its reſemblance to the purſuits of men. A fly ſuggeſted the idea of *buzzing*, and *buzzing* was ſomething like the voice of fame.

An ill-placed and injudicious repetition of the ſame words ought as much to be avoided as chacing and catching at their relatives and aſſociates.

> *Touch'd* by the croſs, we live; or, more than die;
> That *touch* which *touch'd* not angels; more divine
> Than that which *touch'd* confuſion into form,
> And darkneſs into glory, partial *Touch!*
>
> *Night-Thoughts.*

Yet repetition, when judiciouſly uſed, is frequently pleaſing and beautiful.

By foreign hands thy dying eyes were clos'd:
By foreign hands thy decent limbs compos'd:
By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd:
By ſtrangers honour'd, and by ſtrangers mourn'd.

HERE the repetition is continued no farther than it ought to have been, and is judiciouſly changed in the laſt line. The pleaſure this figure affords in poetry ſprings evidently from the ſame cauſe with that which repeated ſtrains give us in muſic; but no rules can be laid down for the management of it, which muſt be entirely regulated by the ear.

OBSERVE, however, that it is not confined to one, or two, or three words only. Sometimes a couplet, or even a whole ſtanza may be happily repeated. I do not here ſpeak of thoſe repetitions which are called the burthen

of

of the ſong, but might more properly be termed a burthen to the ſong: For the illuſtration of what I mean, let the following paſſage ſuffice, which I give you not in preference to any other, but becauſe I can write it from memory, without the trouble of referring to books.

Illuſions dear, adieu! no more
Shall I your fairy haunts explore,
Since Hope withholds her golden ray,
And Fancy's colours faint away.
To *Eden's ſhores, to Enon's groves,*
Reſounding once with Delia's loves,
Adieu! that name ſhall ſound no more
O'er *Enon's groves, or Eden's ſhore.*
For Hope withholds her golden ray,
And Fancy's colours faint away.

REPETITION is ſometimes uſed to expreſs fondneſs, ſometimes ſcorn, and ſometimes to enforce the belief of what appears ſcarcely credible. In the laſt inſtance it is uſed, though

though with a mixture of diſdain, very happily by Catullus:

Cœli, *Leſbia noſtra, Leſbia illa,*
Illa Leſbia, quam Catullus unam
Plus quam ſe, atque ſuos amavit omnes,
Nunc in quadriviis, et angiportis, &c.
Ad Cœlium, de Leſbia. Carm. 58.

Chapelle ſeems to have ſhut his eyes againſt this egregious beauty, when he could thus feebly tranſlate the paſſage,

Qui l'euſt cuî, mon cher Cœlius,
Cette ingrate & fiere Leſbie,
Que j'amois autant que ma vie,
Oubliant ſon orgueil à Rome & ſes virtus,
Des chevaliers Romains brigue la connoiſſance.

SOMETIMES a word is repeated for the enlargement of the idea it is intended to convey, when it admits of no comparative increment:

And time waſtes wearily the *dull, dull* day.

The

The uſe of repetition in moral and didactic poetry is to fix ſome important precept in the memory.

" Whatever is, is right."

LET-

LETTER XV.

To the ſame.

The Subject continued.

THE great buſineſs of judgment in the verbal province, is *properly to adapt the expreſſion to the ſentiment*. In this article there are a thouſand avenues to impropriety and abſurdity. It is natural for indifferent poets (indifferent writers that would be thought poets) to emblazon their pages with glowing expreſſion, and to hide with pompous diction their poverty of ſentiment; on the other hand the beſt poets are ſometimes ſo ſecure under the force and beauty, the elegance or novelty of their thoughts, that they heedleſsly ſuffer the expreſſion to fall below and diſ-

grace

grace them. This will appear from the following paſſage:

—— More true joy Marcellus exil'd feels
Than Cæſar, with a ſenate *at his heels*.

Eſſay on Man.

It is, however, a much more common fault to raiſe the expreſſion above the ſentiment than to let it ſink below it. What can be more ridiculous than the following deſcription of a ſhell-fiſh left by the tide?

——— Torn from its green domain,
The ſmall inhabitant of ſcaly walls,
Rides on the rough back of the rugged wave,
And roll'd precipitate upon the ſhore,
Lies unrevolv'd by motion. *Anon.*

Thus the milkmaid bruſhes thro' the dews in a morning.

——— The roſeate Nymph
That draws the tepid nectar from the teat,

With

With the fair border of her downward veſt
Deterſive, robs the flowers of orient pearl.

Ibid.

Froſty weather will benumb a girl's fingers, and make her noſe red:

——— nitrous piercing froſt!
Whoſe chains coercive the quick muſcles bind,
And tinge with crimſon the projecting grace
Of Sylvia's aſpect! *Ibid.*

THE great cauſe of theſe abſurd deſcriptions is the admitting of low and mean images, or objects, into a ſpecies of poetry which is naturally above them. The colouring muſt neceſſarily be conſiſtent, and when the image is low or trivial it is heightened up to the reſt by pompous expreſſion.

WORDS have their different degrees of dignity as well as things, and it is the pro-

perty of true criticiſm to ſuit them to the objects they expreſs. Familiar ideas muſt be conveyed by familiar phraſes; and when great ſentiments are to be expreſſed, the language muſt be raiſed in proportion. The utmoſt care ſhould be taken that the expreſſion neither riſe above, nor fall below the ſubject. In either caſe it will be ridiculous, and inadequate in both. The ſentiment will fare like a perſon who is either too highly or too ſlightly ſpoken of, and who muſt of conſequence either diſappoint expectation, or ſuffer unmerited cenſure.

But, methinks, you call upon me to direct you how to keep the due, but difficult, medium. In this caſe I would adviſe you in general, *to aim at ſimplicity*.

When we ſeek for words to expreſs our ideas, we are inclined to chuſe the moſt glowing

glowing and high-coloured, and, if any thing elſe contributes to determine our choice, it is novelty; but we are miſled by falſe judgment in both theſe caſes. In the firſt, we judge as children do of paintings, and place the merit of the picture in the flame of colouring; and in the latter, we conclude that the novelty of the words we make uſe of will be communicated to the ſentiment: But in this caſe, as well as in the other, how much are we miſtaken! Our thoughts may derive a quaintneſs, an air of novelty from being expreſſed in an uncommon combination of words; but from that alone they can never acquire originality.

To paint from nature, we muſt aim at ſimplicity. There is a native beauty in all her objects, which wants only to be exhibited in the ſimpleſt manner to pleaſe. Secure in her own charms, and independent of the adſci-

adſcititious ornaments of art, ſhe appears moſt to advantage when her attributes are not over-heightened. To expreſs myſelf in the words of an ingenious lady,

" Enough, the Muſe her wreath of ivy twines,
" Mixt with each ſmiling field-flower's fragrant
" bloom !"

Amongſt the ancients, Theocritus and Tibullus are the pureſt models of ſimplicity. The graceful plainneſs of nature is happily imitated in all the rural images of the former. With what charming eaſe does his ſhepherd ſit and ſing !

Αιθ' επ εμες ξωοις εναριθμιον ωφελες ημες,
Ως ϝοι εγων ενομευον αν' ωρεα ϝας καλας αιγας,
Φωνας εισαϊων. τυ υπο δρυσιν, η υπο πευκαις
Αδυ μελισδομενον κατακεκλισο, θειε Κομαϊα.

Idyl. VII. v. 86. &c.

Ah ſhepherd! wert thou numbered with the
living,
Thy bonny* ſhe-goats on the mountains ſide
Full gladly would I feed; whilſt thou, dear
ſwain,
Should'ſt take thy ſweet pipe, and, beneath
the pines,
Or ſpreading oaks, make melody for me.

Tibullus was alſo happy in his expreſſion of nature; his language is beautifully ſimple, neither too low nor too ornate.

Ipſe ſeram teneras maturo tempore vites
Ruſticus, et facili grandia poma manu.

Nec tamen interdum pudeat tenuiſſe bidentem,
Aut ſtimulo tardos increpuiſſe boves.

Non agnamve ſinu pigeat, ſatumve capellæ
Deſertum oblita matre referre domum.

Tib. Lib. I. *L.* 1.

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* This word is moſt expreſſive of the Greek καλὸς.

With

With timely care I'll ſow my little field,
And plant my orchard with its maſter's hand,
Nor bluſh to ſpread the hay, the hook to wield,
Or range the ſheaves along the ſunny land.

For her I'll yoke my oxen to the plow,
In gloomy foreſts tend my lonely flock;
For her, a goat-herd, climb the mountain's brow,
And ſleep extended on the naked rock.

If late at duſk, while careleſly I roam,
I meet a ſtrolling kid, or bleating lamb,
Under my arm I'll bring the wanderer home,
And not a little chide its thoughtleſs dam.

Hammond.

Hammond, who, as you have rightly obſerved, borrowed the chief beauties in his Elegies from Tibullus, ſeems to have been apprized that the principal excellence of his author was the graceful ſimplicity of his ſtyle: and indeed the Engliſh poet has very happily availed himſelf of his model. The Roman

bard has in every inſtance ſhewn his fondneſs for the elegant plainneſs of nature; he could not even bear to meet his miſtreſs in a full dreſs:

Tunc mihi, qualis eris, longos turbata capillos,
Obvia nudato Delia curre pede.

LET-

LETTER XVI.

To the ſame.

The Subject continued.

CAREFUL, indeed, you muſt be, that your expreſſion neither riſe above nor fall below the ſentiment; but that will not be enough. Let it be your care likewiſe, to expreſs neither too little nor too much. Scarce any fault is ſo common in poetry as the *pleonaſm*.

THERE are two kinds of redundances, the verbal and the ſentimental; but, as I have not yet done with the province of words, I ſhall at preſent conſider only verbal redundances.

THIS fault, upon the leaſt attention, is ſo extremely obvious that you might very well diſpenſe with my adverting to it at all. But what ſhall we think when we find the beſt poets ſo frequently chargeable with it? The moſt correct writers in our own and in every other language are full of redundances, of words that ſerve no other purpoſe than that of filling the meaſure of the verſe.

WE need not go out of our way to ſeek for inſtances. Thus in Pope,

High heaven the *footſtool* of his *feet* he makes.
Il. B. VIII.

Loſt in the near *effulgence* of thy *blaze*.
Thomſon's Summer.

——— inform'd the heart
Of innocence, and *undiſſembling* truth.
Ibid.

—creative

——— creative love
Still bade *eternal* Eden ſmile around.

Ibid.

At once the chaſer, and *at once* the prey.

Pope.

When froſts have whiten'd all the *naked* groves,
Where doves in flocks the *leafleſs* trees o'er-
ſhade. *Ibid.*

——— ſongs and rhymes
Prevail as much in theſe *hard* iron times, &c.

Dryden.

To multiply inſtances of this kind would be invidious and unneceſſary. The above-quoted are ſufficient to juſtify my obſervation, and they are taken from reſpectable writers to convince you how very neceſſary it is to guard againſt them.

In deſcriptive poetry it is moſt difficult to keep clear of ſuperfluities. When the me-

mory ranges through the wilderneſs of words, we are not always contented with what is ſufficient to expreſs our ſentiments, but are tempted to indulge in ſuperfluous diction, by the faſcinating charms of novelty or harmony.

—— In ſwelling epithets, thick-laid
As varniſh on a harlot's cheek, the reſt
Thin-ſown with aught of profit or delight.
Milton.

In youth particularly, when the reins are thrown upon the neck of Fancy, our poetical productions are always filled with a profuſion and ſuperfluity of expreſſion. It is then we are moſt apt to judge of poetry, as children judge of pictures, and to place its principal excellence in richneſs of drapery and height of colouring. By giving way to the luxury of words, we loſe all preciſion, and become unavoidably inaccurate and redundant.

THAT

THAT your writings may for ever be exempt from this fault, let me again adviſe you to aim at ſimplicity. Be jealous of thoſe words that ſolicit admiſſion merely on account of their ſplendor. Let no epithet have place becauſe it is tuneful or well dreſt, if it has otherwiſe no right to appear.

LETTER XVII.

To the ſame.

The Subject continued.

SOMETHING muſt be ſaid on the Harmony of Numbers. But, where ſo much depends upon the ear, you muſt expect that I ſhould make obſervations rather than lay down rules. At the ſame time you will conſider that thoſe very obſervations, muſt be agreeable to the deciſion of my own ear, and therefore you may give them what credit you pleaſe.

I THINK it is agreed by all, who have any pretence to a ſuperior judgment in poetry, that blank verſe is capable of the greateſt, the moſt powerful and the moſt various harmony.

mony. The flow of numbers is not reſtrained by the neceſſity of a cadence at the end of the verſe, which is frequently indiſpenſible in the Couplet-meaſure: The harmony extends unbroken through an arbitrary number of lines, and falls or riſes with the ſubject without ſuppreſſion or reſtraint.

> Boldly aſſault the Necromancer's hall, ||
> Where if he be, || with dauntleſs hardihood,
> And brandiſh'd blade, ruſh on him, || break his glaſs, ||
> And ſhed the luſcious liquor on the ground.

It would have been impoſſible for the numbers of the couplet to have expreſſed the above action with like imitative force. Methinks a modern rhymer would have turned it thus,

> Riſe, and aſſault the Necromancer's hall,
> If there the juggler be, ſecure his fall,
> Proceed with brandiſh'd blade, and break his glaſs,
> And pour the liquor, on the *verdant graſs.*

It

It is not only the misfortune of rhyme to call for ſuperfluous epithets, and uneſſential images, but that eternal monotony to which the couplet meaſure is liable, muſt be tireſome to every judicious ear.

It is ſomething like the ringing of five bells in a country ſteeple, that repeat their ding, dong, ding, dong, ding, with one unvaried cadence.

Let us read a paſſage taken from the Prince of Rhymers, and on a ſubject too that ſhould have been diſtinguiſhed by variety of numbers, had the couplet been capable of variety.

'Tis not enough || no harſhneſs gives offence;
The ſound muſt ſeem || an echo to the ſenſe; ||
Soft is the ſtrain || when Zephir gently blows,
And the ſmooth ſtream || in ſmoother numbers flows: ||
But when loud ſurges || laſh the ſounding ſhore,
The hoarſe rough verſe || ſhould like the torrent roar: ||

When

When Ajax ſtrives || ſome rock's vaſt weight
to throw,
The line too labours || and the words move
ſlow. ||

What a painful monotony is produced in the above verſes, (where the harmony ſhould have been as much as poſſible diverſified) by the regular pauſe in the middle of each line, and the cadence at the end of each Couplet!

I AM much miſtaken if blank verſe would not have given greater ſcope to imitation on ſuch a ſubject. Let us try:

'Tis not enough the tuneful verſe avoids
Hard-grating harſhneſs; echo to the ſenſe,
The ſound ſhould ſeem to echo. Sighs the
breeze
Melodious? ſoftly flow the liquid lay.

Slide the ſmooth muſic like the glaſſy wave.

Not ſo, when rolls the wild flood, ſurge on
ſurge,

Voluminous ; the high foam to the beach,
Daſhing, yielding, then daſhing—thro' the verſe
Thundering impetuous burſts the big-ſwoln tide.

To heave ſome rock's vaſt weight ſtrains the firm arm ?
Slow move the words oppreſt, and the verſe ſtrains.

But it is not my deſign at preſent to dwell upon the ſuperior advantages of blank verſe in point of harmony. I would enquire by what means the numbers in every ſpecies of verſification may be rendered moſt harmonious.

To begin with blank verſe.

It is a bad compliment indeed, to heroic rhyme, to ſay, that blank verſe in its flow and ſtructure ſhould be as unlike it as poſſible. But it is certainly true. The nearer reſemblance the ſtructure of blank verſe bears to that

that of the Couplet, the leſs harmonious it will be found.

O He is good, He is immenſely good!
Who all things form'd, and form'd them all
for man.
Who mark'd the climates, varied every zone,
Diſpenſing all his bleſſings for the beſt.

Approach and bring from Araby the bleſt,
The fragrant caſſia, frankincenſe and myrrh,
And meekly kneeling at the altar's foot,
Lay all the the tributary incenſe down.

SMART, *on the Goodneſs of the Supreme Being.*

Such blank verſe as this, is worſe than rhyme. It is ſubject to the ſame monotony by adopting the ſame unvaried pauſe and cadence, and it is leſs agreeable to the ear, being deſtitute of thoſe chimes, with which cuſtom has prevailed on us to be pleaſed.

How differently are we affected with the blank verſe of a Thomſon, or a Milton!

A genius

A genius univerſal as his theme,
Aſtoniſhing as chaos, as the bloom
Of blowing Eden fair, as heaven ſublime.

Thomſon's Seaſons.

How ſweetly did they float upon the wings
Of ſilence, thro' the empty vaulted night!
At every fall ſmoothing the raven-down
Of darkneſs, 'till it ſmil'd. *Milton.*

The true harmony of blank verſe is produced by making the lines in general flow one into another, and by varying the pauſes. The cadence ſhould never be thrown upon the ſame points for more than two or three lines together, but ſhould be ſhifted to a different part of the verſe, and, as the variation of the harmony may require, be placed on the ſecond, fourth, fifth, ſixth, ſeventh, eighth, or tenth ſyllables. Sometimes the pauſe may be agreeably ſuſpended thro' the ſpace of two or three lines. The harmony of muſic, particularly the muſic of Handel, whoſe

whoſe harmony is more perfect than that of any other maſter, will afford many examples of imitation for the poet. He may alſo receive conſiderable aſſiſtance from muſical melody, or air, which is the arrangement of ſimple ſounds in a regular progreſſion either aſcending or deſcending. The ſwelling, the falling, the arreſting of the ſtrain, and the *Deceptio Auris*, when, after being brought to the very point of cloſing, it is unexpectedly continued, may all be ſucceſsfully imitated in the various melody of blank verſe.

I AM of opinion that the numbers of this ſpecies of poetry are by no means brought to that perfection of which they are capable. The beſt poets have frequently diſgraced them by running into the Couplet-monotony. Thomſon's melody is in general better varied than that of Milton, for the latter admits of too many diſcords; though a competent

number, judiciouſly introduced, is as neceſſary in poetry as in muſic. But Thomſon has often fallen into the homotony of the couplet:

> Here ceas'd the youth; but ſtill his ſpeaking eye
> Expreſs'd the ſacred triumph of his ſoul,
> With conſcious virtue, gratitude, and love,
> Above the vulgar joy divinely rais'd.

To avoid this defect, and in the progreſſion of your melody to change your pauſes, and vary your cadences with care, and art, is all the advice I have to give you concerning the ſtructure of blank verſe.

LET-

LETTER XVIII.

To the ſame.

The Subject continued.

I DO not look upon rhyme to be, as ſome have ſuppoſed, of monkiſh extraction. I think it is of a more ancient date. It was probably firſt invented for the aid of memory. The learning of the Druids was orally communicated to their diſciples, and their precepts were retained memorially under thoſe forms of verſe in which they were delivered. It ſhould ſeem, therefore, that they firſt found out the expedient of rhyme to make their verſes more tenable. Unfortunate it is that it periſhed not with their ſyſtem. But ſince cuſtom has chained us to it, let us make the beſt of it.

In heroic rhyme ſome have attempted to avoid the monotony which is produced by the cadence falling conſtantly on the end of the couplet. The means they made uſe of was to ſuſpend the cadence, by extending the ſenſe, and keeping up the flow of the ſtrain from the laſt line of a couplet to the firſt of the next. This may ſucceed in ſome caſes where the harmony is imitative, as in the following paſſage:

> While every youth, with Fame's ſtrong impulſe fir'd,
> Preſs'd to the goal, *and at the goal untir'd,*
> *Snatch'd each celeſtial wreath* to bind his brow,
> The muſes, graces, virtues could beſtow.
>
> *Iſis, an Elegy.*

The ſuſpenſion of the cadence has not the ſame good effect in the enſuing verſe; for beſide that it has nothing of imitation to recommend it, it is ſuſpended too long. The breath is

is ſtrained, and the ear is tired before we arrive at it.

> All, all appear; on me they grateful ſmile,
> *The well-earn'd prize of every virtuous toil*
> *To me with filial reverence they bring,*
> And hang freſh trophies o'er my honour'd ſpring. *Ibid.*

It is evident from the laſt-quoted paſſage, and from a thouſand others, which I might add to it, that the numbers of the couplet cannot diſpenſe with the uſual cadence at the end of it. That cadence, however, may be occaſionally rendered ſtronger or weaker, and ſo may admit of ſome little variation. The couplet may cloſe with any degree of punctuation from the comma to the period.

> Then bade them leave the loftier ſcene a while,
> The pomp of guiltleſs ſtate, *the Patriot toil,*
> For bleeding Albion's aid the ſage deſign,
> To hold ſhort dalliance with the tuneful Nine.
> *Triumph of Iſis.*

I ſee the ſable-ſuited prince advance,
With lilies crown'd, the *ſpoils of bleeding France*,
EDWARD —— the Muſes in yon hallow'd
ſhade
Bound on his tender thigh the martial blade.
Ibid.

I have always been pleaſed with the flow of the following lines in Pope's imitation of Horace's Epiſtle to Auguſtus, and yet there is in ſome of the verſes a great ſameneſs of cadence, but perhaps it is the continuation of the ſenſe thro' ſix or eight verſes that makes the harmony more agreeable, as it is uſual for the ſenſe to be cloſed with the couplet.

Edward and Henry, now the boaſt of Fame,
And virtuous Alfred, a more ſacred name,
After a life of generous toils endur'd,
The Gaul ſubdued, and property ſecur'd,
Ambition humbled, mighty cities ſtorm'd,
Or laws eſtabliſh'd, and the world reform'd,
Clos'd their long glories with a ſigh, to find
Th' unwilling gratitude of baſe mankind.

To

To continue the ſenſe generally as far as the harmony will bear, at leaſt not to diſſolve it conſtantly at the end of the couplet, and to vary the reſts, ſo as to make them fall on different ſyllables in different lines, is all that can be done for the improvement of the numbers in the heroic couplet.

THE numbers appropriated to the Elegy, where the rhyme is alternate, one would expect to be leſs expoſed to a monotony of cadence, than the heroic meaſure; the length of the ſtanza too ſeems to promiſe a greater variety than the couplet. But this kind of meaſure has notwithſtanding a diſgreeable ſameneſs in its ſtructure, and every ſucceeding ſtanza is a faithful echo to the laſt. Yet is there ſomething plaintive in it, ſome pathetic ſoftneſs in the deſcending melody that ſeems fitted to expreſs the tender paſſions. It is the peculiar language of love and melancholy,

when they ſoothe their ſorrows with the penſive muſe.

Wilt thou, Monimia, ſhed a gracious tear
On the cold grave, where all my ſorrows reſt?
Wilt thou ſtrew flowers, applaud my love ſincere,
And bid the turf lie light upon my breaſt?

On this account the numbers well deſerve our attention, and if any thing can be thought of to prevent the identity of ſound and cadence in the ſeveral ſtanzas, it will be a valuable improvement.

OCCASIONALLY to make the laſt line of a ſtanza flow into the firſt of the next, i. e. to continue the melody, may contribute in ſome meaſure to this end.

Th' applauſe of liſtening Senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to deſpiſe,
To ſcatter plenty o'er a ſmiling land,
And read their hiſtory *in a nation's eyes*

Their

Their lot forbade; nor circumſcrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd,
Forbade to wade thro' ſlaughter to a throne,
And ſhut the gates of mercy on mankind.

All elſe that can be done, is to vary the pauſes in each ſtanza ſo as to give a different air to the numbers. Thus, in one ſtanza, ſuppoſe the bar ſhould be fix'd, in the firſt line, after the fourth ſyllable; in the ſecond, after the fifth; in the third, after the fourth; and in the laſt after the fifth; this ſucceſſion might, in the next ſtanza, be entirely reverſed, and by that means ſome little variety would be obtained.

To conſider the harmony of every ſpecies of verſification in Lyric poetry, diſtinctly, would draw me beyond all bounds. Moreover the attempt would be vain; for the lyric muſe is continually varying her numbers, and combining them in the manner that is moſt agreeable

able to her ear. I quarrel not with this freedom as it gives ſcope to that variety which is the ſoul of harmony. Provided the numbers do not run wild indeed; provided the analogy of the harmony be ſtill preſerved, the diverſification of the numbers muſt always have a good effect. Even the variation of the rhyme will ſometimes be pleaſing to the ear:

Or, as the lark with matin-notes,
To youth's new voyagers in ſpring,
While over head in air ſhe floats,
Attendant on unruffled wing,
Warbles inartificial joy,
My muſe in tender ſtrains ſhall ſing
The feats of VENUS' winged boy;
Or how the nimble-footed HOURS,
With the three GRACES knit in dance
Follow the goddeſs ELEGANCE
To HEBE's court, in PAPHIAN bowers.

The Call of Ariſtippus.

There is an eaſy lightneſs as well as variety in theſe numbers, which had their origin in

 France,

France, and were introduced by our truly Anacreontic countryman, Mr. Gilbert Cooper. But this airy melody is only calculated for light ſubjects, and would be ridiculous if employed to expreſs the grave or the ſublime. It is the peculiar excellence of lyric poetry, that it can vary its numbers without impropriety, and can attune them to tenderneſs, majeſty, or eaſe, as the ſubject may require.

LETTER XIX.

To the ſame.

The Subject continued.

A WORD or two on imitative Harmony. That ſounds may ſometimes be ſo combined as to bear a reſemblance in their flow to the action they expreſs, is beyond a doubt. A verſe may be conſtructed in ſuch a manner as, when properly pronounced, to be rapid or ſlow, bold or ſoft, rough or ſmooth.

THESE are general properties of artfully conſtructed verſes.

THUS a ſlow motion may be expreſſed,

The huge ſtone urg'd ſlow up the ſteep hill's height.

RAPID

RAPID movement thus,

Down, with precipitate rapidity,
Ruſh'd down.———

WHEN a bold action is expreſſed, the verſe moves with a great ſolemnity, a confirmed ſtep ſuitable to the idea:

Daſh the proud Gameſter in his gilded car,
Bare the mean heart, that lurks beneath a ſtar.
Pope.

How expreſſive of a ſoft and gentle action, is the liquid flow of the following couplet!

Ye gentle gales, beneath my body blow,
And *ſoftly lay me* on the waves below.
Pope.

Nothing is ſo eaſy to imitate by ſounds as a rough motion; notwithſtanding it is but indifferently effected in this line:

The hoarſe rough verſe ſhould like the torrent roar.

The

The rough and roaring movement of a torrent is feebly imitated, and the introduction of the liquid word, *like*, is very unhappy. In the following verſes the torrent moves more expreſsly:

Does it deſcend from a mountain?

Reſiſtleſs, roaring, dreadful, down it comes.

Is it oppoſed in its paſſage by over-hanging rocks and woods?

It boils, and wheels, and foams, and thunders through. *Thomſon.*

Spumeus, et fervens, et ab objice ſævior Ibat. *Ovid. Met.*

It is more difficult to make the ſound of the verſe expreſſive of ſmoothneſs in a language which abounds with monoſyllables. I have met with few unexceptionable inſtances of this expreſſion, even

In

In the ſmooth muſic of harmonious Rowe.

The following lines are tolerably imitative of ſmoothneſs, but I own they are unſatisfactory to my ear:

Fair Thames, flow gently from thy ſacred ſpring—
Soft as he mourn'd the ſtreams forgot to flow—
Go gentle gales, and bear my ſighs away.

Pope.

Poſſeſſed of theſe general properties of imitation, and capable of various combinations, words are made to imitate many particular actions and movements.

THUS we hear a thunder ſtorm amongſt the mountains in Wales:

Amid Caernarvon's mountains rages loud
The repercuſſive roar: with mighty cruſh
Into the flaſhing deep, from the rude rocks
Of Penanmour, heap'd hideous to the ſky,
Tumble the ſmitten cliffs.——— *Thomſon.*

The

The movement of the following verſes is ſtill more imitative :

Follows the looſen'd aggravated roar,
Enlarging, deepening, mingling, peal on peal,
Cruſh'd horrible, convulſing heav'n and earth.
Ibia.

Then thunder oft with ponderous wheels rolls loud,
And breaks the chryſtal urns of heaven.
Dyer.

When a ſtagnant lake is deſcribed, you can ſcarce get through the ſlow line :

In Syrian valley, *where now the dead ſea*
'Mong ſolitary hills infectious lies. *Dyer.*

Is not the flow of a caſcade happily imitated in the following line ?

Fall in tunes ♯ all adown || the green ſteep || ye caſcades. ||

The four reſts are very expreſſive, and the muſical ſound of the words contributes greatly to

to heighten the imitation. Mr. Dyer, from one of whoſe fugitive pieces the above verſe is taken, was perhaps the greateſt maſter of imitative harmony that ever wore the Britiſh bays. What ſhould ſeemingly be a paradox, he has more than once made ſounds imitate ſtillneſs. For inſtance, when he deſcribes a ſhip becalmed, how expreſſively do his ſlow-labouring words paint

> The dead calms, that oft lie on thoſe ſmooth ſeas!

You know that this imitative Harmony is not a new art with *us*. Shakeſpear abounds with inſtances of it, ſeveral of which you will find quoted in Mr. Webb's remarks on the beauties of poetry. There are numberleſs beauties of this kind in the works of that divine Poet which can only be diſcovered by a nice ear, and a juſt method of reading.

WHAT a languid faintneſs does he throw into the line which expreſſes the paſſion of death!

> The breath no ſooner left his father's body,
> But that his wildneſs, mortified in him,
> *Seem'd to die too.* *Henry* V.

Are we not aſſiſted by the very form and mechaniſm of the verſes to

> ——— behold the threaden ſails,
> Borne with th' inviſible and creeping wind,
> *Draw the huge bottoms* thro' the furrow'd deep?
> *Henry* V.

Poets of an inferior rank have likewiſe aimed at this kind of beauty, and ſometimes have ſucceeded. In a paſtoral of Sir Charles Sedley I remember the following verſes:

> *Had early winds with a hoarſe winter's ſound*
> Scatter'd my ripening fruit upon the ground.
>
> *But now thy flocks creep feebly thro' the fields,*
> No purple grapes thy half-dreſt vineyard yields.

There

There is a happy ſimplicity in the following verſes, taken from the ſame author; but is there not ſomething in the flow of them expreſſive of feſtivity?

> Strephon! O Strephon! once the jollieſt lad
> That with ſhrill pipe did ever mountain glad!

The ſound of many words is imitative of the action they expreſs, on which account the labour of ſelection and combination is greatly leſſened. I dare ſay that it gave Rowe very little trouble to compoſe the following couplet, however excellent it may be thought in point of imitative harmony:

> Heard the loud floods of rolling ſulphur roar,
> And burſt in thunder on the burning ſhore.
>
> *Tranſlation of Lucan*, B. VI. v. 1017.

After all, perhaps the ſeveral verſes quoted in this letter, will be no otherwiſe of ſervice to you, than as they convince you of the

poſſibility and variety of imitative harmony. You will obſerve how ſounds, under particular modes of combination, imitate the action, or motion, or object they expreſs; but the art of combining ſounds ſo as to produce that effect cannot be taught. Your ear alone muſt direct you in the whole œconomy of verbal harmony. Poetical compoſition admits not of the certainty or preciſion, by which muſical compoſition is directed, but even in that the imitative harmony is not to be attained by rule. It is the peculiar excellence of genius, and characterizes almoſt all the compoſitions of the immortal Handel.

LETTER XX.

To the ſame.

The Subject continued.

FOR the aid of judgment in the ſentimental province, I would recommend one general and infallible precept. *Follow Nature.* It is only when we loſe ſight of her that we give into rants, flights, hyperboles, and every other ſpecies of falſe compoſition; and how very apt we are to do this, might be proved by inſtances drawn from the beſt writers. Even Nature and Homer were not always the ſame: While he is attempting to exalt his heroes into gods, he aſcribes a meanneſs to his gods that would debaſe his heroes.

Pluton ſort de ſon Trôn, Il pâlit, Il s'écrie.

But it is in our ideas of greatneſs and magnificence that we moſt commonly tranſgreſs the bounds of nature and probability; and the writers of thoſe countries particularly where the fine arts have made no conſiderable progreſs towards perfection, are almoſt univerſally chargeable with this defect.

The Spaniards and the Portugueze have no idea of copying nature from herſelf, or of drawing any thing comparatively great or ſublime; in every thing of that kind they go to the extent of imagination. To this, poſſibly, their native pride may add ſomething, particularly when they are ſpeaking of their kings or their countrymen. Thus a Spaniſh poet, in a poem entitled *Jeruſalem conquiſtada*, deſcribes the ſea trembling, and death flying before the Caſtilians, when

they followed their king Alphonſo, and our lion-hearted Richard to the conqueſt of Jeruſalem:

Es una fiera gente la de Eſpana
Que quando à pechòs una Empreſa toma,
Los tiembla el mar, la muerte los eſtrana.
Lop. de Veg.

Another writer of that country compoſed the following epitaph for Charles V. which, though not the falſe ſublime, proves their unlimited indulgence of the imagination.

Pro tumulo ponas orbem, pro tegmine cœlum,
Sydera pro facibus, pro lachrymis Maria.

A Portugueſe hiſtorian, ſpeaking of a fort at Japan, ſays, the ditch was ſo deep, that one might ſeemingly go down and make war upon the devils in the infernal regions. *Que parece ſe abria para ir fazer guerra a os demonios no inferno.*

THERE are ſome readers who can reliſh theſe intolerable hyperboles: For my part, I confeſs that whatever is beyond all natural poſſibility gives me diſguſt; nor can I ſubſcribe to the following paſſage in Quintilian. *Tum hyperbole virtus, cum res ipſa, de qua loquendum eſt, naturalem modum exceſſit. Conceditur enim plus dicere: quia dici quantum eſt non poteſt, meliuſque ultra quam citra ſtat oratio.* For though the ſubject to be deſcribed may exceed the ordinary bounds of nature, yet it certainly does not exceed the bounds of poſſibility, which the hyperbole very frequently and very unceremoniouſly does.

Do you think *Malherbe* defenſible on the principles of Quintilian, when he compares the tears of the queen-mother, on the death of Henry the Great, to an overflowing of the Seine?

L'image

L'image de ces pleurs, dont la ſource fécond
Jamais depuis ta mort ſes vaiſſeaux n'a taris,
C'eſt la Seine en fureur qui déborde ſon onde
Sur les quais de Paris.

And is he not ſtill more abſurd, more ridiculouſly extravagant in the following deſcription of St. Peter's repentance?

C'eſt alors que ſes cris en tonnerres s'eclatent:
Ses ſoupirs ſe font vent, qui les chénes combattent;
Et ſes pleurs qui tantôt deſcendoient mollement,
Reſſemblent un torrent qui des hautes montagnes
Ravageant et noyant les voiſines campagnes,
Veut que tout l'Univers ne ſoit qu'un element.

We have an Engliſh *Malherbe*, whom the Frenchman has not left far behind:

——— I found her on the floor,
In all the ſtorm of grief, yet beautiful.
Sighing ſuch breath of ſorrow, that her lips,
Which late appear'd like buds, were now o'erblown;

Pouring

Pouring forth tears at ſuch a laviſh rate,
That, were the world on fire, they might have drown'd
The wrath of heav'n, and quench'd the mighty ruin. *Lee.*

THERE is no ſpecies of writing in which the poet is ſo apt to deviate from nature, and to be ſentimentally wrong, as the dramatic. Inſtead of putting himſelf in the place of the character, and conſulting his own heart, how he ſhould expreſs himſelf under the various influences of the paſſions, he gives way to his imagination, and indulges himſelf in flights and refinements at the expence of truth and propriety.

WHEN Almeira leaves Oſmyn in his cell, his eyes are with great propriety repreſented as ſtraining eagerly after her; but when ſhe is out of ſight, the lover breaks forth, very unnaturally, into a philoſophical harangue on the nature and properties of viſion:

O Im-

O Impotence of ſight! mechanic ſenſe,
Which to exterior objects ow'ſt thy faculty,
Not ſeeing of election, but neceſſity.
Thus do our eyes, as do all common mirrors,
Succeſſively reflect ſucceeding images;
Not what they would but muſt; a ſtar or toad:
Juſt as the hand of chance adminiſters.

Mourning Bride.

This is a ſtrange ſtate of mind for a lover who had the moment before parted with his miſtreſs, or rather for a huſband who had parted with a beloved wife, and in ſuch circumſtances, that it was uncertain whether he ſhould ever behold her more!

When a perſon in the height of rage, is adviſed by his friend to be patient, is it probable that he ſhould be ſo adroit at metaphor and alluſion, as to anſwer him in the following manner?

Go, bid the moving plains of ſand ſtand ſtill,
And ſtir not when the ſtormy ſouth blows high,

From

From top to bottom thou haſt toſt my ſoul,
And now 'tis in the madneſs of the whirl,
Requir'ſt a ſudden ſtop. *Dryden.*

Yet you ſcarce ever find a man in a paſſion but you catch him a-ſimile-making:

The ſtorm is up, and my hot bleeding heart
Splits with the rack, while paſſions, like the winds,
Riſe up to heaven, and put out all the ſtars.
Lee.

Mine is a grief of fury, not deſpair,
And if a manly drop or two fall down,
That ſputtering into flames, works outward into tears,
It ſcalds along my cheeks, like the green wood.
Dryden.

I believe it is, in general, vanity, rather than want of judgment, that draws us aſide from nature. When the poet has conceived a ſtriking ſimilitude, or a pretty refinement, he cannot

cannot bear that it ſhould be ſuppreſſed, and therefore puts it into the mouth of the ſpeaker, however unnatural and improper it may be in his circumſtances.

THE French and Italian poets are, I think, more guilty of theſe ſentimental faults than thoſe of our own country. If they can ſay *pretty* things, it is all that many of them aim at, whether under the influences of anger, ſorrow, or deſpair. Forgetting that juſt queſtion of Quintilian, *ſententioliſne flendum erit?* They dreſs up their very elegies in the furbelows of wit, and embelliſh their funeral ſorrows with artificial plumage.

THUS, in the *Italian* poet, Tancred mourns over the tomb of his beloved Clorinda:

O Saſſo amato et honorato tanto
Che d'entro hai le mie fiamme, e fuori il pianto:

Non

Non di morte fei tu, ma di vivaci
Ceneri albergo ove é ripoſto amore.

Is the turn in the two laſt lines expreſſive of the bewailing ſorrows of love? *Sententiaſne flendum erit?*

LET-

LETTER XXI.

To the ſame.

The Subject continued.

ALMOST all the pleaſure we receive from poetical compoſition, is derived originally from imitation. We are ſtruck with lively portraits of the manners and paſſions. We preconceive the features which the poet ſhould give them, and, if he agrees with our conceptions, he pleaſes by flattering our ſkill. *Our* ideas of all objects, being borrowed from the ſame Archetypes, cannot differ much from the ideas of others; if, therefore, we refer to our own conceptions we cannot greatly err even in ſentimental imitation.

HOWEVER,

However, if to indulge ourſelves in pointed and curious turns of thought, we depart from the eſſential language and properties of nature, we muſt remember that in proportion to the pleaſure which a well finiſhed imitation would have given, will be the diſguſt that follows a different execution.

It would be needleſs for me to remind you, that the ſentiment ſhould always correſpond with the ſubject; that light or trivial matters ſhould never be dignified by grave or ſerious thoughts; and that, on the contrary, ſubjects of a ſerious caſt ſhould by no means be burleſqued by light or ludicrous ſentiments. But though that may be unneceſſary, perhaps it may not be equally ſo to recommend to you a conformity of ſentiment, and to remind you that your thoughts

thoughts ſhould be of the ſame caſt and complexion through the whole piece.

THIS caution is no leſs neceſſary for the proſe-writer than for the poet, and I well remember the time, when, as a proſe-writer, I ſtood in need of it myſelf.

There is a ſtyle of ſentiment as well as of language; and the analogy ſhould be attended to in the former as well as in the latter. From want of obſerving this analogy, what ſtrange medleys of compoſition have been produced! what tragical comedies, and what comical tragedies! Hence the origin of the Bathos, and of every ridiculous and heterogeneous combination.

IN deſcriptive poetry, two things, with regard to ſentiment, ought to be obſerved, viz. that it neither be too trite nor too trif-

lingly minute. It is the part of true genius to place familiar objects in a new point of view, and to utter nothing that is unworthy the *Os magna ſonaturum.*

LET.

LETTER XXII.

To the ſame.

The Subject concluded.

UPON the concluſion of my laſt, I did not intend to carry my obſervations on the ſentimental part of poetry any further. But one reflection more on that ſubject you will indulge with your attention.

As in every piece of poetry, the ſtyle of the ſentiment ſhould be uniform through the whole piece, ſo in every particular ſentiment the ſeveral parts ſhould bear a due relation to the principal thought.

It is not at all uncommon to admit, in the ſame ſentence, ideas that have no kind of connection with each other. Thus Dryden ſays from Virgil,

And *under Tyrian robes* the Lamb ſhall *bleat*.

What reference has the bleating of a lamb to the robe that it wears? Virgil, however, is in this place, not much more excuſable than Dryden:

Sponte ſuâ *ſandyx paſcentes veſtiet* agnos.

Paſcentes has not much more relation to *ſandyx veſtiet*, than *bleat* has to the Tyrian robes, but one word ſerved to make up the verſe, as the other did the rhyme. It would be needleſs for me to multiply inſtances of this fault, with which almoſt every poem will furniſh you, and I only mention it that you may be upon your guard againſt it.

I SHOULD

I SHOULD now proceed to give you my thoughts on comparative imagery, but I avoid it for two reaſons. One is, that ſo wide a field would tempt me beyond the bounds I have preſcribed to this ſeries of letters, and the other, that I may ſome time or other write a regular eſſay on comparative imagery and figurative expreſſion.

THE firſt of theſe apologies might perhaps be ſufficient with you; for, have I not already wearied you? Should it be ſo, yet have I no excuſe but what is common to every other well-meaning offender. Some comfort, however, I find in this reflection, that you cannot but be ſenſible how much, in all theſe letters, I have ſtudied *your* advantage, more than my own entertainment. I have not indulged myſelf in ſpeculation, becauſe I had precept in view; and I have choſen rather to make obſervations, from

which practical rules might be deduced, than to give the reins to imagination, and to chace every ſhadow ſhe would have ſtarted in the faery fields of *poeſie*.

MAY my labours be acceptable to you, and I ſhall be ſatisfied: May they be uſeful, and I ſhall be happy. But remember that if you do not reduce thoſe rules to practice, which indeed I have been at ſome pains to lay down for you; if you, in your turn, will not ſacrifice to the muſes, I muſt number the hours that have been thus employed, among thoſe that I have loſt.

I MEAN not that you ſhould have ſtated times for your poetical labours, or that, like Pope, you ſhould write your fifty verſes a-day: It is the favourable hour of fancy you are to ſeize; the moment when the Miltonic viſitant arrives; when imagi-

nation

nation is on the wing. The muſe, like every other miſtreſs, has her *Mollia Tempora fandi*; and muſt be courted only when the humour hits.

LETTER XXIII.

A PRAYER for INDIFFERENCE.

By Mrs. Greville.

OFT I've implor'd the gods in vain,
And pray'd till I've been weary;
For once I'll try my wiſh to gain
Of *Oberon* the fairy.

Sweet, airy Being, wanton Sprite,
That lurks't in woods unſeen;
And oft by Cynthia's ſilver light
Trips't gaily o'er the green!

If e'er thy pitying heart was mov'd,
As ancient ſtories tell,
And for th' *Athenian* maid who lov'd,
You ſought a wondrous ſpell ———

Oh! deign once more t' exert thy power!
Haply ſome herb or tree,
Sov'reign as juice of weſtern flower,
Conceals a balm for me.

I aſk

I aſk no kind return in love,
No tempting charm to pleaſe:
Far from my heart thoſe gifts remove
That tend to peace or eaſe.

Nor peace nor eaſe the heart can know,
Which, like the needle true,
Turns at the touch of joy or woe,
But, turning, trembles too.

Far as diſtreſs the ſoul can wound
'Tis pain in each degree:
Bliſs goes but to a certain bound:
Beyond is agony.

Take then this treach'rous ſenſe of mine,
Which dooms me ſtill to ſmart;
Which pleaſure can to pain refine,
To pain new pangs impart.

Oh! haſte to ſhed the ſacred balm!
My ſhatter'd nerves new-ſtring;
And for my gueſt, ſerenely calm,
The nymph *Indifference* bring.

At her approach, ſee *Hope*, ſee *Fear*,
See *Expectation* fly!
And *Diſappointment* in the rear,
That blaſts the promis'd joy.

The tear, which pity taught to flow,
The eye ſhall then diſown:
The heart that melts for others' woe,
Shall then ſcarce feel its own.

The wounds which now each moment bleed,
Each moment then ſhall cloſe,
And tranquil days ſhall ſtill ſucceed
To nights of calm repoſe.

O fairy Elf, but grant me this,
This one kind comfort ſend!
And ſo may never-fading bliſs
Thy flowery ſteps attend!

So may the glow-worm's glimmering light
Thy tiny footſteps lead
To ſome new region of delight,
Unknown to mortal tread!

And be thy acorn goblet fill'd
With heaven's ambroſial dew
From ſweeteſt, freſheſt flowers diſtill'd
That ſhed freſh ſweets for you.

And what of life remains for me
I'll paſs in ſober eaſe;
Half-pleas'd contented will I be,
Content but half to pleaſe.

Such is the beautiful poem of which I have often wiſhed to ſend you a copy, but had never, till now, an opportunity of procuring one. Indeed I had ſome ſcruples about communicating it, being inform'd that the ingenious author deſired it might not be copied. But thoſe ſcruples are now removed.

You will eaſily perceive that its characteriſtic excellence lies in the delicacy of the ſentiment; and, indeed, I never met with any thing that evinced a finer ſenſibility.

At the ſame time the expreſſion is not only eaſy and elegant, but frequently very happy. Perhaps there is not in the Engliſh language a more ſtriking inſtance of the *curioſa felicitas*, than the following ſtanza:

Nor peace nor eaſe the heart can know,
  Which, like the needle true,
Turns at the touch of joy or woe,
  But, turning, trembles too.

A fine

A fine imagination and a ſenſible heart generally go together, of which nothing can be a ſtronger proof than the *Prayer for Indifference*.

LET-

LETTER XXIV.

To the ſame.

FROM *the mob of gentlemen who wrote with eaſe*, in the days of *Charles* the Second, among a very few more names, I would have you diſtinguiſh Sir *Charles Sedley*. This gentleman had a good deal of wit, ſome genius, and a tolerable ear. Sir *Charles*, indeed, wrote with eaſe as well as his contemporaries, but not with that kind of ſilly, unſentimental eaſe for which their poetry was, in general, deſervedly cenſured. He ſtudied human nature, and was diſtinguiſhed for the art of making himſelf agreeable, particularly to the ladies; (for thoſe verſes of Lord *Rocheſter*, ſo often quoted, allude not to his writings, but to his perſonal addreſs.) Hence thoſe ſentiments on the human paſſions, which

we find in his poems, are many of them ſtriking, and peculiarly his: Thus of the *belle* paſſion he obſerves that it ſeldom ſurvives hope:

Love does ſeldom Hope ſurvive.

His capital performance is a poem on Marriage, of which ſtate he has not only conceived juſt and noble ſentiments, but has ridiculed with great wit and propriety thoſe ſordid motives that join ſo many wretched hands. He opens his poem with the view of that happy union in which our firſt parents were placed by their benevolent Creator. Such a ſcene was likely to animate the imagination, and awake the powers of genius. A poet of Sir *Charles Sedley*'s ſenſibility, in particular, could not be cold upon it. His language is the effuſion of rapture.

Circling her ſnowy neck, he ſought her heart,
A fiery lover, without fraud or art.

The

The object of his reſtleſs thoughts was bliſs,
And that he found in one embrace, one kiſs;
One claſp, one hug, one eager glance was more
Than worlds of pearl, or heaps of golden ore.

Then, then the new inhabitant was bleſt,
Eaſe watch'd his heart, and peace ſecur'd his breaſt.

The following verſes, taken from the ſame poem, are very pretty and truly *Cowleian*:

Love, like a cautious fearful bird, ne'er builds,
But where the place ſilence and calmneſs yields:
He ſlyly flies to copſes, where he finds
The ſnugging woods ſecure from blaſts and winds.

In another paſſage the poet ſeems to have had *Tibullus* in his eye:

When clamorous ſtorms and pitchy tempeſts riſe,
Cheek clings to cheek, and ſwimming eyes to eyes.
When jarring winds and dreadful thunders roar,
It ſerves to make 'em preſs and love the more.

Nothing

Nothing can be more appoſite than the following ſimilies, applied to thoſe who marry merely from lucrative motives:

Perhaps a cold reſpect they both may ſhew,
As impious men to a kind dæmon do,
Who, when ſome ſkulking wealth he does unfold,
Honour and dread him for their new-found gold.

But view! unrobe the boſom of diſguiſe!
Obſerve the ſtrange averſion of their eyes!
With palpitations of regret they twine,
Like oil and water their falſe loves combine.

Some other ſimiles in the ſame poem are intitled to no inferior degree of praiſe.

If crouded cheſts and glutted coffers can
Reſtore contentment to the anxious man,
Poſſeſs'd of thoſe, if he from pain is free,
A troubled may be called a quiet ſea,
Becauſe there's pearl and amber on the ſhore—

In another place,

To

To various climes of tempers each are thrown,
The frigid coupled with the torrid zone.
Like curs of different natures in a chain,
They're link'd in fear, and wear their bonds in pain.

But the liberal Sir *Charles* loſes all patience when a woman gives herſelf up to avarice, and legally proſtitutes her perſon for money. Such a one, he ſays,

Would wed a coffin, were the hinges gold.

His wit always riſes with his indignation, and ſome ingenious comparative image is generally produced.

Thus might ſhe claſp a loathſome toad in bed,
Becauſe he bears a pearl within his head.

But ſtill, tho' wealth their griping ſenſes feaſts,
At moſt they're but concatenated beaſts.

As the excellence of lyric poetry, was at that time ſuppoſed to conſiſt rather in elegant wit

and eaſe, than in exuberance of fancy, imagery and enthuſiaſm, *Sedley* muſt have made no indifferent figure in that ſpecies.

You ſhall hear him then once more enforcing the generous doctrine of love-matches in the lyric ſtrain:

See! Hymen comes; how his torch blazes;
Looſer loves how dim they burn!
No pleaſures equal chaſte embraces,
When we love for love return.

When Fortune makes the match, he rages,
And forſakes th' unequal pair,
But when love two hearts engages,
The kind God is ever there.

Regard not then high blood nor riches,
You that would his bleſſings have:
Let untaught love guide all your wiſhes:
Hymen ſhould be Cupid's ſlave.

The ſenſeleſs ſing-ſong, which was ſo faſhionable in the court of *Charles* the Second, and

and which, without either ſentiment or connection, flowed from the ſilver pens of the mob of gentlemen, was burleſqued by *Sedley* with as much ſpirit and humour, as the *Arcadian* nonſenſe of lord *Suffolk* and his brethren was by *Swift*, in his ſong a la mode. *Sedley*'s ſong is as follows:

SONG a la mode.

O'er the deſart, croſs the meadows,
Hunters blew the merry horn;
Phœbus chas'd the flying ſhadows,
Echo, ſhe replied in ſcorn,
Still adoring,
And deploring,
Why muſt Thyrſis loſe his life?

Rivers murmur'd from their fountains,
Acorns dropping from the oaks,
Fawns came tripping o'er the mountains,
Fiſhes bit the naked hooks;
Sill admiring,
And deſiring,
When ſhall Phyllis be a wife?

Thus have I had the pleaſure to introduce you to a new, and, I preſume, an agreeable acquaintance; for though you were ready to aſſign poor *Sedley* his portion with the mob of gentlemen, I think you owned that you had not ſeen his works. For my part, nothing gives me greater pleaſure than the retrieving of any man's fame, but more particularly the reputation of the dead; and what I have thus privately done for Sir *Charles Sedley*, perhaps I may take ſome opportunity to make public.

LET-

LETTER XXV.

THERE is nothing more remarkable than that thoſe books are always read with the greateſt avidity, that enter into the prevailing paſſions, and bring before the heart the images of its own feelings.

UPON the reſtoration of letters under the pontificates of Julius the Second and Leo the Tenth, ſuch of the Roman poets as had devoted their writings more particularly to love, were, for that reaſon, much more cultivated and attended to than the reſt, and Tibullus and Propertius were better known than Horace or Juvenal.

THE Provencial poets, charmed with the eaſe and enthuſiaſm, caught the ſpirit of

thoſe writers; and naturally deriving the ſame ſenſations from the ſame genial climate, they no ſooner repaired thoſe lyres that had been broken by Gothic barbarity, than they tuned them entirely to love:

> Sweet were their ſtrains, but love was all they ſung.

However,

> The ſoft deſcriptions could not fail to move,
> For, led by nature, all are friends to love.

The ſucceſs of the Italian poets in deſcribing the effects of the tender paſſion was very great; nor is it at all to be wondered at; for they felt what they deſcribed. Sometimes, indeed, they miſtook an artificial prettineſs for a natural beauty, nor was the celebrated Taſſo altogether free from this imputation; but generally their love-ſcenes, indulging always the romantic,

were

were naturally painted. That they were greatly heightened by imagination, it is true; the poet in ſuch caſes aſſumes the ſame privilege with the painter, and what he creates he embelliſhes to the utmoſt ſtretch of fancy; ſtill, however, keeping the laws and proportions of Nature in his eye; for, though he may have ideas of a more perfect beauty than ſhe ever created, or of more exquiſite ſenſations than ſhe ever gave, yet it is upon her own principles that he is directed to thoſe ideas.

By the ſame rule, Taſſo was not wrong even in an obſervation that was dictated by the moſt glowing jealouſy. The ſucceſs of his Aminta excited Guarini to write the *Paſtor Fido*; and when that poem was more applauded than the Aminta itſelf, and almoſt univerſally allowed to be a ſuperior compoſition, Taſſo declared publicly, that, "if

"Guarini

" Guarini had not ſeen his Aminta he could " not have excelled it."

THE laſt-mentioned poet was one of the ſtrongeſt and moſt ſentimental painters of love.—He has not only deſcribed its general effects, with which moſt other writers of the ſame caſt have contented themſelves, but has entered minutely into its leſs diſtinguiſhed influences, and its finer operations.—His *Paſtor Fido* contains the whole philoſophy of love, and in that work the heart is inveſtigated through all the variety of its perceptions.

THERE is, moreover, an almoſt inimitable happineſs in the tender melody of the expreſſion. A perfect knowledge of harmony exerciſed upon the moſt muſical language in the world, produced the moſt wonderful and moſt delightful effects.

WHAT

WHAT ear can attend with indifference to the following piece of muſic?

Quell' Augellin, che canta
Si dolcemente, e laſcivetto vola
Hor da l' abete al faggio,
Et hor dal faggio al mirto,
S' aveſſe humano ſpirto,
Direbbe, ardo d' amore, ardo d' amore:
Ma ben arde nel core,
E parla in ſua favella
Si che l' intende il ſuo dolce deſio:
Et odi a punto, ſilvio,
Il ſuo dolce deſio,
Che gli reſponde, ardo d' amore anch' Io.

The bird that in yon vocal groves
Its amorous lay ſo ſweetly ſings,
And careleſsly on wanton wings
To beech, or pine, or myrtle roves;
If it thy ſenſe or voice poſſeſt,
It would tell thee how it loves,
Could it ſay in words confeſt,
Gentle love inſpires my breaſt;
Gentle love inſpires my breaſt.

Yet that love it feels as well,
And can its tender paſſion tell
In a language not unknown
To the ſweet partner of its cares,
That all its fond attention ſhares,
And an equal love would own ;
Could it ſay in words confeſt,
Gentle love inſpires my breaſt,
Gentle love inſpires my breaſt.

It appears that our immortal Milton had read with conſiderable attention the delightful poem from which the above paſſage is taken; for he has not ſcrupled to adopt ſome of its particular ſentiments in different parts of his works. I have not the leaſt doubt that his genius was enriched and his enthuſiaſm infinitely heightened, by being ſo happily converſant with the moſt ingenious of the Italian poets, perſonally with thoſe of his own time, and intimately with the writings of thoſe who flouriſhed before him. One may trace without

without much difficulty the tenderneſs of their manner in various paſſages of his poems; for Milton, however rich in original genius, was no more unwilling than Virgil was, to avail himſelf of imitation.

FINIS.

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